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Development agencies focus on using 'appropriate technology'

Alan Doerksen

HOLLAND, Mich. — If relief agencies want to be effective in helping the people of developing countries improve their living standards, one of the best ways is to use "appropriate technology," according to workers for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) and other relief and development agencies.

But what is appropriate technology (AT)? Scott Crickmore, who works with CRWRC in Mali, West Africa, defines it as "any device or methodology that allows humans to be more productive and to live more comfortably. To be appropriate a technology must be locally sustainable, and culturally appropriate."

"For example, a tractor is a marvelous machine for improving the productivity of farmers throughout the world, but if an illiterate, subsistence farmer is given one he/she has several hurdles to face: how to purchase fuel (and other expendables) on an existing income of several hundred dollars a year, and more importantly how to maintain a machine when the nearest parts and expertise might be hundreds of miles away."

"A culturally inappropriate pro-

ject might be to introduce hog farming into a Muslim community. While this type of farming might be efficient and profitable in many parts of the world it is bound to fail in this context because, one, no one would want to work with 'unclean' animals; and two, no one (locally) would want to purchase this product."

Efficient stoves catch on

One of CRWRC's projects in Mali which the Crickmores work with is the introduction of fuel-efficient stoves. "Certainly the fuel-efficient stoves are AT," Crickmore asserts. "Local metal workers are taught how to produce these. They can be made from locally purchased materials and with locally available tools. They certainly improve human comfort by reducing (by nearly half) the amount of wood a woman needs to collect.... It looks like improved wood stoves are finally being accepted by local home-makers."

"The vaccination program is also an example of AT. We work in cooperation with the local health department which is funded by the Malian government and UNICEF." Medical supplies "can

be maintained even in a place like Mali using kerosene refrigerators, and the vaccination is often delivered by health workers on mopeds" which are readily maintained and not overly expensive to operate.

Crickmore is critical of how some agencies have used inappropriate technology to help out developing countries. "The world is littered with expensive, rusting machines that were not appropriate in the local context. The cost of those machines was wasted. That money could have been better used."

He continues: "The main advantage to AT is that, if it is indeed appropriate, it will last and continue to benefit those using it for years to come. What advantage is there in giving an individual a diesel pump to irrigate his fields that will increase his productivity for one or two seasons and then be

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CRWRC PHOTO

An appropriate-technology brick-making machine being used by CRWRC workers in South Africa.

abandoned for lack of fuel or spare parts? This is not cost effective and is a squandering of precious resources. Technology usually re-

quires an solid infrastructure and literate, highly-trained individuals to maintain it. Many developing
See APPROPRIATE page 2...

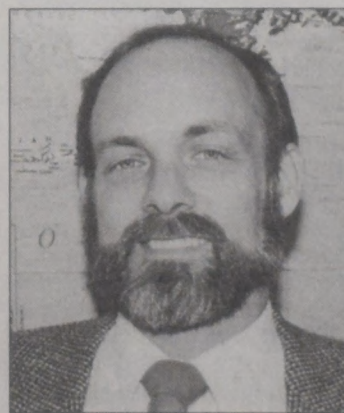
Christian Reformed Church's Canadian Ministries director resigns

Marian Van Til, with files from Henry Hess

BURLINGTON, Ont. — Raymond Elgersma, director of Canadian Ministries for the Christian Reformed Church, has resigned his position, effective January 31. The Burlington, Ontario, office of the Christian Reformed Church in North America announced Elgersma's intention on January 11, accepting his resignation "regretfully."

Elgersma was hired as Canadian Ministries director in May 1998. His challenge would be to implement the restructuring of the CRC's ministries in Canada, as approved by the church's 1997 general synod.

But Synod 1999's decision *not* to implement restructuring for the entire denomination was a primary factor in Elgersma's deciding to



CCFILES

Raymond Elgersma

leave his position.

"The Canadian Ministries Board (CMB) was empowered by Synod 1997 to replace the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada and to oversee and

co-ordinate all Christian Reformed ministries of the CRC," explains Henry Hess, communications director of the CRC in Canada.

CMB chairperson Peter Nicolai explains that the dissolving of the Council and creating of the Canadian Ministries Board was Synod 1997's answer to empowering the Canadian wing of the church. But in his and Elgersma's view, Synod 1999, by not approving further changes based on 1997's assumptions, has set back the ability of the CRC in Canada to govern its own affairs in Canada.

The writing on the wall

Nicolai says Elgersma felt he couldn't function well in such circumstances.

On December 29 Elgersma addressed a lengthy and candid
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How to read the Bible



Four useful principles.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven's editorial, p. 4

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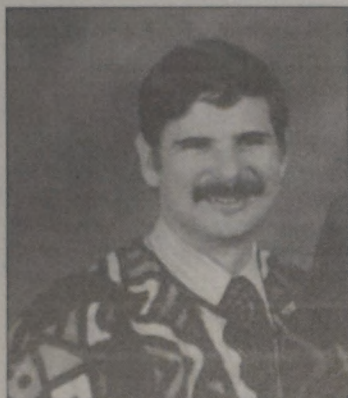
Appropriate technology should match abilities, capital of local culture, say specialists

... continued from page 1

countries lack the necessary infrastructure and human resources to sustain some technologies on a broad scale."

But Crickmore notes that there are sometimes disadvantages to AT. "Increasing productivity may not always be beneficial in the long term," he says. "For instance, introducing hand pumps into arid areas may provide water more easily, but this can potentially lead to overgrazing in those areas and exhaustion of fragile water tables."

Ironically, Crickmore has just become CRWRC's new Information Systems Co-ordinator (ISC) a position he describes in an e-mail interview as: "really about high tech, not appropriate technology. CRWRC wants to take advantage of the Internet and related technologies in helping us as an organization to better serve the poor.... In fact, I am doing the ISC position from Mali — really pushing the definition of telecommuting."



COURTESY CRWRC

Scott Crickmore

Rick de Graaf, who works with Domestic Ministries and Church Relations for CRWRC in Canada, worked in Bangladesh several years ago. At that time, many Bangladeshis cooked rice over an open flame, which was very wasteful of energy. But one of the national churches, which CRWRC was working with, developed a clay stove which worked more ef-

ficiently. De Graaf explains that the stoves are sunk into the ground, which provides insulation. Wood or straw are used as fuel for this AT stove. "You can see them everywhere now" in Bangladesh, says de Graaf. CRWRC is helping to promote simple technology such as the clay stove in Bangladesh.

Concerns about capital

Dave Gelzink says AT "needs to fall within the abilities and capital of the people it's serving." Gelzink worked with CRWRC in Haiti from 1975 to 1980, and now runs his own company, Gelzink Steel, which is based in Holland, Mich. Among other things, his company has designed and built a brick-making machine, which is now used in Ukraine and Honduras. This machine would also be appropriate in any tropical country, Gelzink asserts.

The brick machine (see accompanying photo) has three moulds, each of which can make a brick. Twenty tons of pressure com-

presses the bricks, even though it is manually operated, explains Gelzink.

Another device Gelzink and his company have created is an oil press, which is used to extract oil from palm berries, vernonia and other plants. The design of the press is simple, involving a piston and a large, heavy-duty metal cylinder, which is rotated by two people walking in a circle. This compresses the plant material, producing oil. The price is very reasonable — "for a couple hundred bucks" a farmer can buy one, says Gelzink. The target country for these presses is Ethiopia. "The design of the press gets three times as much oil as before" from plants, explains Gelzink. The traditional method used was to boil palm berries and scoop oil from the top, but that was less efficient than the oil press, says Gelzink.

This year, Gelzink is helping engineering students from Calvin College to design and produce a pedal-powered machine some-

thing like a bicycle to help Kenyans carry water or agricultural products from place to place. This will be "more efficient than doing it by hand," explains Gelzink. Right now, Kenyans in the target area often carry these products on their heads. The Calvin students "call themselves Hotwheels!" says Gelzink. They hope to build a prototype of the device in May.

Gelzink has other criteria for what makes appropriate technology. One is: the capital cost of a project should be limited to \$100,000 per workplace. "If it takes more capital than that, it's not worth it," he asserts. Such projects should also minimize the use of resources from outside the target area. If it requires more capital than labor, and requires fuels or resources not available locally, it is inappropriate, he contends.

(For more about appropriate technology, please see story on page 3.)

Synod 1999's rejection of structural changes led to resignation

... continued from page 1

On December 29 Elgersma addressed a lengthy letter to Dr. Peter Borgdorff, executive director of ministries for the whole CRCNA, based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and to the Canadian Ministries Board.

'Writing on the wall'

Elgersma said that when in June of last year Synod 1999 declined to approve the further restructuring, which he felt would improve the Canadian CRC's effectiveness, he "committed [himself] in July to walking through the transition process ... to see what the outcome would be. Six months later, I believe the 'writing is on the wall.'" (Borgdorff was traveling outside the U.S. at this writing and was unavailable for comment.)

Elgersma reflected on the vast amount of energy he has expended in the four years as he participated in two denominational study committees involving the church's restructuring, and on the personal time he has committed to the job.

"I have measured that against the outcomes," he said, "reflected on the future potential for the vision that came out of the two reports, and determined that I am not going to continue."

Elgersma admitted in his letter

that he has "simply lost the energy and interest in providing leadership to ministry in the Canadian context of the CRC," and that he has "struggled not to be cynical at times."

His feelings about Synod 1999's rejection of further structural changes have been "all over the map," he acknowledges. "I have been angry, frustrated, somewhat excited this past September when we looked at the new governance model, reflective, and finally accepting of the decision that was made. (It almost sounds like the grieving process.)"

Binational character of church in jeopardy

He asserted, "I have also come to the realization that my vision, which I believe reflects the vision of the two reports, is not where we are headed.... I think that we will be overshadowed in our binational context and will 'lose' as a Reformed witness in Canada if there is not a distinctness that will be empowered in our binational context. Given what I feel, I know that I could not possibly continue to lead. Nevertheless, I am strongly committed to the CRC and its ministry. And I remain committed to our being a binational church."

Elgersma was facing a steep up-

hill path. He says that "in talking to pastors, leaders, and other members of our churches, there is limited support or vision for this ministry initiative. Some leaders (pastor and elders) in my own church which nominated me for this position have indicated to me that the decision of Synod '97 should never have been made, and some question why we would continue. Others have been more charitable (and perhaps less honest), but have not been terribly encouraging."

Elgersma contends that the church will "simply have to change" if it is to take advantage of new opportunities for ministry in Canada in the years ahead.

He elaborates: "Some of that will come from those agencies [which] see the value in collaborative ministry activity. But much of that thrust will come from the local church, as we move to greater capacity and support for ministry in the local church."

But local church members are not much interested in church structure at the denominational level. And a complicating factor is that "the U.S. side of the church has minimal understanding or interest in what it means to be a binational church."

Yet in remaining binational, the

CRC is unique. Elgersma is "sure that few [people] realize that we are the only significant (in size) denomination that is binational. The other binational churches have all become two national churches over the last 30 years."

Canadians an anomaly

However, the Canadian part of the church, which is slightly more than a quarter of the denomination in North America, has long been plagued with second-fiddle status, or at least feeling like second-fiddlers.

Elgersma believes that "synod's [1999] decision has given license to our agencies and their boards to continue as they have. Most of my colleagues stateside (and some in Canada) are happy with synod's decision."

"That leaves our Canadian office playing a very secondary role in the whole scheme of things. In many ways, we are an anomaly that somehow needs to be accommodated in the current structure."

Pushing a cart with square wheels

To move beyond that will be daunting, "akin to pushing a cart with square wheels," Elgersma asserts. "It can be done but it takes a lot of hard work. I did that for six

years with CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Committee). I had felt that the mandate from synod '97 and the '99 structure report had moved us beyond that. Synod 1999's decision has moved us back, from my perspective. I am not ready to invest in that process all over again."

Despite the structural problems, many joint "collaborative activities" have been taking place in the Canadian office, says Elgersma, and he thinks those will continue. That approach is "part of the Canadian office's 'DNA,'" he says, "and will continue."

Elgersma says he felt called to his position, but now wonders. "Perhaps God called me knowing that this would be a short-term assignment and that I can leave, feel okay about leaving, and feel confident that he will provide something else in my future."

He says he will go ahead "with confidence that it is the best decision for me, that it will be the best decision for the church in the long run, and that God will lead as we look to the future."

The National Ministries Board is to meet January 28-29 to decide what to do about replacing Elgersma. Peter Nicolai says Synod 2000 will re-look at the issue in some way, as mandated by Synod 1999.

News/Politics

Hunger group, Mennonites use 'appropriate technology'

Alan Doerksen

NORTH FORT MYERS, Fla. — Charlie Forst, the resident expert on appropriate technology (AT) with the Florida-based Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO), has been familiar with AT since his childhood in Appalachia. "Today we give it a fancy name — appropriate technology," Forst writes in a recent ECHO newsletter.

"When I was growing up in southern West Virginia ... during the pre-Depression and Depression days, it was just a way of life. We weren't even up to Third

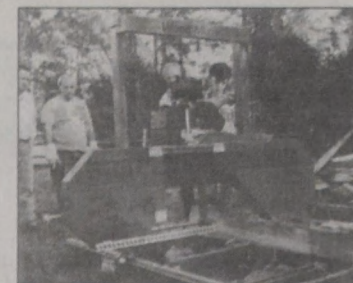
World status — it was more like Fourth World!" Forst learned a lot about simple practical technology from watching "how the old folks did things."

More recently, Forst worked in Kenya in the late 1990s, helping the Maasai people find appropriate crops and ideas to help subsistence farmers there. "While in Kenya, I worked with formulating feeds other than what the animals pick up in the pasture," Forst explains. "We were able to upgrade the livestock with agricultural products or with things they had on hand.... We burned bones for bone meal, used

blood to make blood meal, and made molasses from the abundant sugar cane.... You can raise pigs on molasses.

"With chickens, I suggested they just keep females and one male for breeding — sell off the males and keep the hens. We also upgraded to goat herds. There are three goat projects that are still going strong, with the goats giving twice as much milk. We did this by bringing in goat stock that was appropriate for Kenya, and developed a four-breed cross for better milk and meat production, as well as disease resistance."

As Forst explains, "An AT program has been at ECHO for a long time. In 1993, I set up a bio-gas digester that used horse manure from a neighbor's horses to make gas to light a lamp.... We're also excited to have a portable Wood-Mizer sawmill in our AT area. These sawmills are so portable they can be disassembled and backpacked on donkeys or floated on canoes into previously inaccessible forested areas to harvest lumber that would otherwise go to waste. This will be a terrific demonstration and teaching tool for missionaries going into the field."



COURTESY ECHO

The Wood-Mizer portable sawmill

product that local entrepreneurs can make and sell," explains Epp. MEDA has also helped to develop irrigation systems in Ethiopia.

For AT to work, Epp insists, "You have to have machinery and technology that can be serviced and used" locally. Ideally, nothing needs to be exported or imported.

But, Epp observes, "Sometimes AT keeps people behind. If you set up systems with no electricity, you won't get electricity." So if an agency only provides appropriate technology, a people group can be left behind in the global economy, Epp warns.

Four political trends of the past millennium



Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

Recent months have seen the media filled with millennial retrospectives as various journals and other periodicals have sought to determine the greatest persons or events of the past 100 or 1,000 years. I had originally sworn not to fall in step with this, but, alas, the temptation has proved too great. Rather than point to specific persons or events, however, I shall instead focus on four significant political trends of the past millennium.

The first and arguably most important is the development in Western Europe of the *state* as an institution binding together citizens and their government. To be sure, political authority is nothing new and has existed from virtually the beginning of human history. Yet political *community* hardly existed in AD 1000. In YIK, if you will, most Europeans considered themselves first Christians, then subjects of a particular feudal overlord, and finally more distantly of a shadowy king or emperor. In some territories, moreover, church bishops possessed both ecclesiastical and political authority, which were hardly distinguished from each other.

Yet by the middle of the past millennium absolute monarchs were creating such countries as England, France and Spain. As that happened, allegiance was unquestionably directed to a king, who sought to consolidate his rule over an expanding territorial domain at the expense of local nobility and church hierarchies. These kings were bringing into being the modern state, and eventually the notion of subjection to a king would be replaced by that of citizenship in a state.

From monarchy toward democracy

The second historic trend was the expansion of European civilization around the globe, beginning with the discovery of the Americas in 1492. Although it is now politically incorrect to celebrate Columbus' journeys, it seems wise to point out that the development he initiated was not essentially different from other previous expansions, e.g., the colonization of the Mediterranean shores by Greeks and Phoenicians in the early first millennium BC.

For our purposes, the spread of Europe meant the spread of the European state system across the

face of the earth, including Asia and Africa in the 20th century. Unfortunately, this has not been an easy process, as seen even in places as close to Western Europe as the Balkans and the Middle East.

Facilitated by the printing press

The third momentous millennial development is the advent of *democracy*, which came about only in the last century or so. Throughout most of the previous 2,500 years, educated opinion considered democracy a certain recipe for chaos and injustice. Yet with the invention of the printing press and the gradual expansion of literacy, the widespread enjoyment of the right to vote became increasingly plausible. In 1900 very few countries were constitutional democracies; in 2000 most at least aspire to be such, even if reality does not always measure up to intentions.

The fourth, and arguably most destructive, trend of the millennium has been the rise of political *ideologies*, which has paralleled a decline in traditional religious faith. These ideologies, such as liberalism, nationalism and socialism, are based on the assumption that mere human beings are capable of shaping history apart from God's norms for living.

Each of the ideologies seeks salvation in something other than the shed blood of Christ; say, in the expansion of individual freedom, national liberation or communal ownership of property. The ripe fruits of these ideologies manifested themselves over the past century as perhaps 100 million people died in the interest of various secular utopian projects.

Let us pray that the coming millennium may see increasing numbers of people acknowledging the lordship of Jesus Christ over the whole of life, including politics.



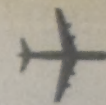
David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario, and found the arrival of Y2K almost as exciting as watching his car's odometer reach 80,000.

Project helps local entrepreneurs

Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) also has some projects which put to use AT in developing countries, although "MEDA is generally not a research and development organization," explains Ed Epp, the agency's director of international opportunities. In Tanzania, MEDA helped to develop hand-made plows which could be pulled by oxen. One focus of that project was "to develop a

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Editorial

How should we read The Book?

Andrew Kuyvenhoven

The black man from Ethiopia drove a Cadillac of a chariot and he invited Philip to sit with him because he needed an interpreter to understand Isaiah. Ever since, the church has given guidelines for Bible interpretation. I propose four general rules.

1. Appreciate the unity as well as the variety of the Scriptures.

The Bible is one book. It is also a collection of 66 books. Interpretation must be aware of both. A person who appreciates the unity but not the variety overlooks the difference between God's Word in Ecclesiastes and the Sermon on the Mount. Asserting, "The Bible says, the Bible says" is too simple.

Scholarly people usually appreciate the great variety in the Bible's style. But not all of them believe in the unity of The Book. They talk about the composition of the written product and the culture of its human authors. Yet they don't get around to telling us what God is saying in a particular part of Scriptures. And that's the purpose of interpretation.

The trick is to do the one without neglecting the other. Every part of Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with the type of literature it is, so it communicates what the author intended. You may not read a proverb as if it were a law, nor a historical happening as if it were a lesson in morality.

To learn the different "genres" takes work. But only after doing that work will you know what God

says to us today. My teacher Dr. Ralph Stob was asked why it is so difficult to find the real meaning of a text. He said: "Because God hates lazy people."

2. Know how to relate the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Certain matters, such as the sacrifices for sin, belong to the Old Testament. They are not fitting for the New after our Lord made his atoning sacrifice. Nevertheless, there must also be continuity between the Old and the New Testament. A strength of the Reformed tradition is its insistence that there is one Covenant of Grace permeating the Bible. But this tradition (with its repetition of the Ten Commandments, singing of the Psalms of David, and observance of the Sabbath) was not always receptive to the newness of the New Testament.

A number of Reformed groups, from the Boers to the Puritans, considered themselves Israel, very exclusive and very much under the law. And many Reformed readers of *Christian Courier* have sensed that their tradition had lost some of the freshness and vigor of the New Testament. Yet, the holiness churches, who have discovered riches in the Spirit, tend to lose the relevance of the Old Testament.

The challenge is to know what is continuous and what fits only in the Old and is inappropriate (or even sinful) in the New Testament dispensation.

The truth of Augustine's saying needs to be recovered again and again: *The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed*. That implies that the New Testament determines how the Old must be interpreted, and that the full meaning of Old is found in the teaching of the New Testament.

The Dispensationalists, who expect a "rapture" of the church, followed by a tribulation and a restoration of Israel, don't believe that the Old Testament determines how the New must be interpreted. They think that the New Testament introduces the "church age," a dispensation not foreseen in the Old Testament. They say that the promises to Israel have not been fulfilled in the New Testament but must be fulfilled when the church has been removed from the earth ("raptured"). This leads to bad speculations about the future of Israel that have nothing to do with the teaching of the New Testament.

Thus, the proper understanding of the relationship between the two Testaments is fundamental to a knowledge of God's will for the present and his purpose for the future.

3. Christ and his gospel form the Key to the Scriptures.

At Pentecost the new age began with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Through the Apostle Peter the Holy Spirit explained who Jesus is. For that's the Spirit's main task. The resulting sermon (Acts 2:14-41) involved a new reading of the Scriptures. Suddenly it became clear that God's redemptive work through Messiah Jesus was at the heart of the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews had never read their Scriptures that way; they still don't.

But the Church of Christ insists: if you continue to read the "old covenant" without seeing the Lord Jesus, you have a "veil" over the Word so that you cannot see the glory (2 Cor. 3: 14). The Bible is the history of salvation, of which Jesus Christ is centre

and theme. This "redemptive history" began after the Fall and will end when God's Kingdom has fully come. This central theme must always be kept in mind, and must be central to the church's teaching.

That was the thrust of a report written by a synodical committee of the Christian Reformed Church. That report, entitled "The Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority" ("Report 44"), was hotly debated in the '70s. The study was a critical answer to the kind of Bible scholarship that was being done in Reformed churches in the Netherlands and elsewhere. That scholarship was rejected. The report became relevant when the question was raised: What does the biblical creation story have to say to physicists, astronomers and archeologists? Does it mean that we have to believe in a six-day creation? Has the church divine authority to make such a declaration?

And this report on biblical authority became relevant to the debate about the role of women in the church. The church of Corinth, in AD 55, considered that "it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in church" (1 Cor. 14: 35). But may we today teach such a thing with divine authority?

In such instances (and we haven't even mentioned slavery) we are aware that the biblical writings are culturally conditioned. Yet they have a message for all times. Therefore it is so important that the church hold on to the Bible's redemptive thrust. That means that one does not really submit to the authority of Scripture unless one's teaching reflects the Bible's intended meaning. And that intention is always related to the gospel of Christ.

We are in an age of advanced scholarship, greatly facilitated by computers. Today there are vast, nearly overwhelming, resources of both Jewish and Christian scholarship available to any student. But all diligence in searching the Scriptures is ultimately worthless if it does not lead to Jesus (John 5:39).

4. Illumination by the Holy Spirit.

Many Reformed church services (and some others too) contain a "prayer for illumination" after the Scripture has been read just prior to the sermon. We must take that prayer very seriously. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate Author of The Book. The Spirit alone can make clear his own intentions. You or I do not have a monopoly on the Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in the church; the church is the Spirit's temple. Church members do not form a bunch of temples, but together we form the Spirit's one temple. Therefore, the truth must be found in the Word of the Spirit, by the Spirit's guidance, and through the Christian community.

The church is not as small as your group or my denomination. God knows his own, and there are more of his own than some of God's prophets think, as Elijah was told. So the writings of the Roman Catholics and the reflections of the Orthodox, for example, may not be spurned by those who lead Bible studies in the Reformed tradition (or in any other Protestant tradition).

And we in our simple and sometimes desperate search for the will of God in our present day must be humbly open to his guidance.

He will not disappoint us.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven is a retired Christian Reformed pastor and former editor of The Banner, the denominational biweekly publication of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

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Letters/Campus

Being 'Israel' is a matter of the heart

In the *Courier* of December 13, 1999, Robert Anes [in a letter] says: "God's ways are not ours," and then proceeds with some remarks regarding Israel and everlasting covenants. I'm afraid that this way is neither doing his Israel nor us any good. It will harden the Jews in their rejection of their

Messiah and will satisfy our minds that mission among the Jews is not necessary because Israel/the Jews is/are God's chosen people.

Let me ask a couple of questions:

Who were the chosen people in Acts 2:41, 47 (41: "Those who accepted his

message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day"; 47: "...And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"); and in Acts 4:4 ("But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand")?

Who is a Jew, a member of God's chosen people, in Romans 2:28-29 (28: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code....")?

No, Brother Anes, God has not forsaken his people (Romans 11:1) and Israel has *not* been replaced by the church. Israel *is* the church, and God is still faithfully fulfilling his covenants.

We should not follow the Sanhedrin, who crucified our Lord because he did not live up to their expectations. We should make sure our expectations and our ways agree with God's ways. The reverse does not work. We cannot force God's way agree with our expectations.

H. Metzlar
Guelph, Ont.

Christ, Karl and cursed questions

Campus Culture

Peter Schuurman



Coming to faith can be mistakenly portrayed as a point of arrival, when it is, in fact, the beginning of a journey. Conversion does not instantly make one careful in thought and thoughtful in caring. The path to spiritual maturity, which we reach when we live every moment in intimate connection with God, can be a perilous pilgrimage.

Let me share with you one such journey – so far. Robb is a friendly, scholarly student with whom I have shared some rich moments over the years. He has blessed me with his incisive remarks, his radical perspective and the recounting of his own life experiences.

Robb was raised Roman Catholic but had what he calls a conversion experience at age 16. He met some people in high school who demonstrated a faith in Jesus Christ that was vibrant and contagious. He was intrigued, and with Romans 1:16-17 as his inspiration ("I am not ashamed of the gospel..."), he lived a year-and-a-half of spiritual bliss.

At the end of high school, however, the honeymoon ended. Problems in the church and problems with friends spiraled him into a crisis of faith. "It was a painful time," he says. "My perfect, disinfected world came crumbling down." Faith seemed hollow and meaningless rather than life-giving and purpose-full.

"Then I came to Brock," he smiles mischievously, "where I was saved by Karl Marx." Robb considers Marx to be like one of the minor prophets, calling out for the oppressed and the outcast, not by some patronizing method in which undeserved charity is handed to poor beggars, but by empowering them, liberating them from the social forces that constrain them.

But Robb also says: "Christ is our liberator. He hung out with the tax collectors and sinners. He lived with the oppressed people of his time." There is undoubtedly a very clear connection between Robb's faith and his politics.

Caught between two worlds

This confronts him with a new tension: dissatisfaction with church Christianity. "Many of the Christians I meet on campus follow a Pat Robertson approach to religion – Christ against culture," he laments. "It is antagonistic, intolerant; fearful of true difference."

He ends up feeling fragmented. On one hand, those who share with him a spiritual commitment do not share with him a cultural sensitivity or political awareness. "It's not even that they have different answers than I do," he explains. "It's that for them, the questions themselves are an anathema."

On the other hand, those who share with him an interest in literature, art, and politics do not understand his deepest spiritual commitments. Robb feels closer to them at times, but still yearns for a place where both worlds could come together.

This is where his present spiritual struggle lies: reconciling two separate worlds, two different types of friends, two seemingly divergent worldviews.

"I don't want to slip into some shallow elitism," Robb warns himself. "I don't want to be condescending with other Christians, for I know they understand some things more than I do. I am in a state of tension between two worlds – something I must accept as I continue to search for how they can fit together."

Robb hopes to go to graduate school and get an advanced degree in sociology. I hope, too, that he doesn't abandon the tension for an easier path. The redeeming work of Christ must reach to the farthest corners of sociology departments. And the studied remarks of sociologists need to be heard in the church.

No question is an anathema on a Christian's journey. As students, as travellers in God's wonder-full creation, we are always seeking, learning, growing.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Don't become flaky!

Please continue to give a biblical, Reformed perspective in the *Christian Courier* if it is to continue its raison d'être. There is so much flakiness in many Christian publications. We are living in a Christian environment that desperately needs to get a

message that is soundly biblical, where there is so much flakiness from fundamental, charismatic Arminian theology.

J.H. Dunnewold
Calgary, Alta.

Thanks (and don't be difficult)

I live in Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ontario. I am almost 85 years old and am able to read most of what it tells us [in *Christian Courier*]. Thank you! But there are many of my friends who tell me: "Fenna, it is too hard for us to understand, at least some of the articles are too long, etc. We will quit [subscribing]."

I was thinking about a CC that is easier to grasp, but I know that is hard! Think about

it. Receive the insight you need. May God bless you.

Fenna Groen
Brampton, Ont.

We're constantly re-evaluating what we're writing and how we're presenting what we write. Thank you for your input. We value it.
MVT

For a quick Letter to the Editor, please send an e-mail to: cceditor@aol.com, or send it by fax to: (905) 682-8313.

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Sports

TV sports: Kneeling at the electronic altar

Ron De Boer

Are you a Maple Leaf or an Oiler? Wasn't Mike Weir's putting game awesome yesterday? Catch the F-1 race Sunday morning? That sure was an important win for the Grizzlies last night. See that Bruce Smith hit on Drew Bledsoe?

If you talk this way, chances are you're an 18 to 49 year-old male, you spend more time buried in the sports pages than anywhere else in the newspaper, you shush everyone when last night's scores come on the radio, and you cruise the Internet for websites of your favorite league. And chances are, you're a cable television subscriber.

That our culture is virtually wallpapered with sports isn't surprising to most of us, but it is the importance and sense of urgency with which we regard sports that is alarming. We are happy when our team wins; we look for inspiration each Sunday during the final round of some *important* golf tournament; we are angry and depressed if the officials blow an *important* call; we ascribe personal feelings to a particular athlete who misses *important* games because he's holding out for a bigger contract.

Consuming conversation

Even for Christians, the major after-church topic of conversation for many is last night's game on Hockey Night in Canada (HNIC for the initiated). We talk about Pat Quinn and Glen Sather as if they are out-of-town uncles. Even those smiling fellows on TSN's "Sportsdesk," Global's "Sportsline," and CTV's "SportsNet" are known to us as *Darrin, Chris, and Gord* — our buddies who want to chew about that amazing lay-up or unbelievable catch; who have the inside scoop on every game and team; who can spit out stats like the times tables; who can recite significant dates and the major combatants in big playoff battles as if they were history professors.

I count at least five Canadian stations (and more in the U.S.) bordered by running tickers of up-to-the-minute scores. It is, of course, crucial that I know the 3rd quarter score even though I can't watch the game. I know someone who carries around one of those Blue Jays score trackers for inning-to-inning updates during night meetings.

Sports stadiums have become the crown jewels of our cities; 30 new football and baseball stadiums have been built since 1990. Many teenagers "play" Proline, gambling on hockey or basketball games. Sports stories regularly



TOM HANSON/CP

You need only look at Wayne Gretzky's retirement this spring to see the influence of television in manufacturing emotion.

spill into news and advertising; athletes-as-criminals sells newspapers, while Wayne Gretzky's ridiculous association with Esso oil is testament to the importance we consumers place on sports celebrities.

But it is the TV sports *talk* that fills in most of the day's hours, not the games. The pre-game shows, the in-between-periods interviews, and the post-game analyses keep us glued to the set for hours with what amounts to clichés ("We just gotta give 100 per cent"), repetition ("This is an important game"), speculation ("He could be out for two to three weeks — how's that going to affect the team?") and outright gossip ("Insiders say he's angry at the coach for benching him"). In other words, a whole lot of talk about nothing.

Analyzing the analysis

But we watch it, analyze the analysis, and sit through the repetition over and over again — with the aid of 24-hour sports channels and the countless sports talk shows and update tickers available to us.

You need only look at Wayne Gretzky's retirement this spring to see the influence of television in manufacturing emotion. From the grainy, slow-motion backyard footage of Wayne to the tear-jerking rendition of Sarah McLachlin's "Will You Remember Me?" as Wayne waved to his adoring throngs, even non-hockey fans with very little sports context were drawn into the emotion.

Gretzky's leaving the game was presented like Christ's ascension into heaven, with hockey fans left gazing at their TV screens hoping their savior would return soon.

And he did. In Esso and Tylenol commercials. The constructed

devastation of Wayne's leaving the game served as an excellent set-up for companies lining up to rent his face to push pills, retirement savings plans and gasoline.

Apparently, Wayne doesn't feel the pinch of near-70-cent-a-litre gas! Don't get me wrong: I have been a faithful follower of Gretzky's career over the years. My point is, television is partly the culprit.

Fantasy worlds

Television creates fantasy worlds of sport about which we're convinced the lives and dramas unfolding truly matter, and then the same medium sells us products we believe will connect us to the likes of Gretzky. In essence, we become part of the sports drama.

The TV sports machine is big — really big. You and I, of course, play an important role in its bigness. We make it big. Without an audience, all the talk, the celebrity endorsements — indeed, the game itself — would disappear.

The game has gone beyond watching the Leafs once a week and collecting a few baseball cards; it's gone beyond simple rivalry and competition and has ventured into a talk and subsequent commerce behemoth. It is a religion with faith in our teams, saviors, and "seasons of destiny."

Do you read more articles about the National Hockey League than the Scriptures? Do you speak of Michael Jordan, Theoren Fleury or Tiger Woods with more adoration and reverence than Jesus Christ? Do you bear the cross of your team's logo more willingly and proudly than the cross of Christ? Do you gaze in awe at the billion dollar stadiums rising like holy shrines in our cities?

All of us love to watch a hard-fought, competitive game. Sports are a healthy diversion from our busy lives; but perhaps many of us need to take an inventory of the number of hours we spend watching, thinking and talking about the sports we watch on television.



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Ron De Boer teaches at Eastwood Collegiate Institute in Kitchener, Ont., and is the author of the Lightbringer Series for young adults. He can be reached at:

Sports: 'state of the union' address

After the Buzzer



Tim Antonides

You probably think I'm a cry-baby. After all, I've spent a good percentage of the space in my column criticizing and complaining about how we play and watch sports.

I make no apologies. I'm not a cynic or a pessimist. I do get frustrated, though. The gift of athletics is constantly being distorted and twisted by greed, selfishness and short-sightedness.

Here we are in a new century. Y2K (sick of that term yet?) has arrived. I hope you've gone to the bank and re-deposited your hoarded cash, and put your generator into storage. It's time for me to put down the poison pen. This month, I want to celebrate some of the good, redemptive things that are happening in sports (amateur and professional) as we begin '00.

First of all, in the last few years there's been a steady shift in popularity to more affordable, socially equitable amateur sports. Soccer, for example, has never been so popular in North America. It's a low-cost, high fitness, hugely enjoyable sport. In kids' leagues, parents are realizing that they don't have to spend hundreds of bucks on skates, pads and sticks in order for their son/daughter to be involved in league sports. Expensive, high-maintenance sports like hockey are great if you have the cash, but soccer is for anyone. The socio-economic caste system of amateur sports is becoming a thing of the past.

Secondly, people are increasingly concerned with getting in shape. Fitness clubs are busy places; low fat foods are an obsession. It's cool to be fit. I can think of worse societal trends than that. Of course, vanity and self-glorification are big motives behind it. Yet along with this preoccupation with looking good, there is at least an awareness that our bodies need to be cared for and maintained. There are some redemptive qualities there.

Accountability

As far as professional sports goes, there are some good things happening too. I think the major leagues are doing a pretty good job of maintaining a degree of integrity among players' conduct. When a star like Charles Barkley shoots his mouth off at an official, he pays the piper.

When Atlanta Braves pitcher John Rocker tells *Sports Illustrated* that he doesn't want to ride a subway train in New York "next to some queer with AIDS" and calls a black teammate "a fat monkey," he is condemned and disciplined by the league.

Six years previous, Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott had been suspended by the league for her use of racial and ethnic slurs. It's good to see the major leagues recognize that being involved in professional sports carries with it responsibility to society, on and off the field.

Finally, it seems to me that sports fans are slowly becoming more intolerant of high ticket prices and exorbitant player salaries. Sports talk shows and magazine articles talk more and more about payroll inequity between teams and the increasing inaccessibility of pro sports to middle-class fans.

In a very slow and gradual manner, fans are becoming weary of having the games they love hijacked by corporate and individual greed. I think the tiny beginnings of a revolution are in place, though I'm not one to underestimate the stupidity and gullibility of North American consumers.

There are some encouraging things happening in sports. Let's not forget that underneath all the nonsense, sports are essentially ways of using the richly complex creations of our bodies to play before our Lord. How human beings choose to distort this good possibility is limited only by humankind's infinite imagination.

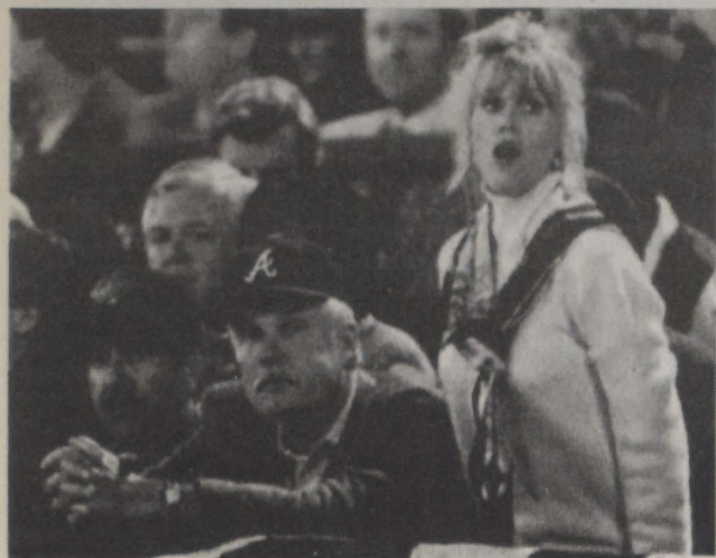


Tim Antonides teaches Grade 8 at Surrey Christian School, Surrey, B.C.

Arts/Media

Jane Fonda, Ted Turner separate over her reported conversion

Need prayer, not gossip says conservative Christian media critic



Ted Turner and Jane Fonda at an Atlanta Braves baseball game.

Dan Wooding

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — "Actress Jane Fonda and her husband, media mogul Ted Turner, need prayer, not gossip." So says Dr. Ted Baehr, chairperson of the Christian Film and Television Commission.

Baehr, who has met with Ted Turner several times, has called on Christians around the world to pray for Turner and his wife, Jane Fonda, the movie star and former radical political activist, who have separated in part over Fonda's reported conversion to Christianity. The couple announced January 4 that, while they are committed to the long-term success of their marriage, they "mutually decided to spend some time apart."

"A year ago, Ted Turner told his marriage counselor that Jane was 'trying to make him a saint,' said Baehr. "This comment was reported but not followed up by the major media." Baehr says Turner was referring to is the fact that Fonda has committed her life to Christ. Baehr says reliable sources, including correspondence by those sources with Fonda herself, have confirmed her conversion.

"In fact," continued Baehr, "Ted Turner has complained that several of his closest friends and associates have accepted Christ over the years: key people in Turner Broadcasting, his best fishing buddy and his former par-amour."

Baehr thinks maybe "God is trying to get Ted Turner's attention." Several years ago, Baehr noted, Turner told a Baptist congregation, during an apology for some anti-Christian comments, that in his youth he had accepted

Jesus Christ at a Billy Graham Crusade but then rejected Jesus when his sister died and his father committed suicide."

Baehr says Christians should be praying for Turner and Fonda and their marriage.

Effective chauffeur

According to a story by Joseph Farah in his WorldNetDaily, an Internet-based news service, Fonda became a believer in Jesus Christ through conversations with her chauffeur. Farah revealed that Fonda's chauffeur began approaching her about his personal faith in Christ two years ago. At first she was uncomfortable with the conversations, but eventually attended church with the chauffeur, Farah said. She regularly goes to Bible studies and church, and her faith is "very real, very deep." Her outlook is changing, friends say.

Jane Fonda incurred the wrath of political conservatives in the U.S. for supporting Communist North Vietnam during the Vietnam War. She was no favorite of conservative Christians [some of the same people who were rankled by her political views] because of her public support for abortion.

Although she has not publicly discussed her current views, she reportedly refused to participate in a meditation ceremony at a recent environmental conference, saying it would be better to "pray to Jesus Christ," Farah said. She has alluded to her faith in Christ publicly at least once, in 1998.

Turner, meanwhile, has been no poster boy for Christians. He has often derided Christians and once called Christianity a "religion for

losers."

The conservative Baehr, who has often reacted vociferously to Hollywood filmmakers, is disturbed by these kind of comments, but has reacted with compassion. He said, "We have all made mistakes. We've all said and done things we learn to regret. And that's a feeding ground for a malicious media, which seeks to create scandal and foment sensationalism. Ted and Jane are two very bright and energetic people caught in the glare of the media's celebrity spotlight. They may be doing the right thing by taking time to re-evaluate and re-appreciate one another. Our prayers — and theirs — can resolve the problem. That is the message of this millennium: Look to God, not the media."

Ted Turner founded the Cable New Network (CNN), and besides his media empire owns the Atlanta Braves major league baseball team.

Priest and rabbi reach people via 'shock jock'

NEW YORK (Religion Today) — Why are a respected priest and rabbi appearing on a shock-jock radio program in New York City? To reach the unreached, they say.

Catholic priest Tom Hartman and Rabbi Marc Gellman, both of Long Island, N.Y., have dispensed good taste and reason as a broadcasting team for more than 10 years. They appear regularly on the interfaith Faith & Values/VISN network and on ABC's *Good Morning America*. The men, both 52, are friends and lead congregations on Long Island. Their popularity prompted New York governor George Pataki to ask them to preside at the memorial service for the victims of a TWA plane that crashed off Long Island in 1996.

They recently began appearing on the radio show of Don Imus. The shock-jock, notorious in New York and on the airwaves for more than 25 years, holds top ratings among morning shows through insults and name-calling.

Some listeners believe Hartman and Gellman are sully themselves by associating with Imus, and wonder why. But the priest and the rabbi say they are trying to reach people who do not attend church or synagogue. They also

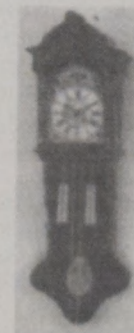
are trying to reach out to Imus.

Gellman told the *National Catholic Reporter* that he will continue on Imus' show because "I believe Don Imus' heart; I don't always believe his mouth."

The clergymen talk to Imus off the air, and say they have seen him

change greatly, including finding help for his addictions to alcohol and drugs. Hartman described him as "pathologically shy" and "looking for authenticity."

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Church

Letter from Europe

People and prayer in Madrid

Jay Reay

I went to Mass on the last Sunday of the year. Although as an Anglican this was unusual for me, being married into a large Catholic family I have attended Masses many times. But this was very different: it was in Madrid at the end of a century of turmoil in Spain.

I found it a moving experience, spiritually uplifting, though I was not able to take Communion. A special opportunity to thank God for his many blessings to me – particularly for my wife and daughters, and our being together again for Christmas – and to pray for his strength and guiding hand for the year to come.

It was also interesting from a sociological perspective. We were staying with our elder daughter who lives in Madrid. In the bright, clear winter sun, we enjoyed seeing this magnificent city set on a high plateau. The city centre dates from the height of the Spanish Empire's greatness in the Americas, and the buildings ooze history and grandeur.

We also delighted in meeting a modern, vibrant people who have at last thrown off the shackles of the medieval, feudal past and the more recent horrors of civil war – fought, at the end, on the very streets we walked in the winter sunshine.

Spain is no longer the rigid Catholic state of ancient (and even recent) history. It is now essen-

tially a democratic federation of autonomous states – some, like Catalunya, Galicia and the País Vasco, also unique, separate cultures. Spain is also an involved member of the European Union and, benefiting from being the fount of one of the world's three most commonly used languages, is once again a global trader.

Unexpected simplicity

The evening service at the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Moncloa district of central Madrid seemed to me to embody much of this recent change.

Most of the congregation appeared to be drawn from the many diplomats and senior civil servants who live in the elegant apartment blocks in the parish, which were built during the short-lived resurgence of Spain's fortunes at the end of the 19th century.

The church itself is simple, which was a surprise to me, as I envisioned Spanish churches only as the huge, sombre Baroque masterpieces I had seen in Toledo, Alcalá and elsewhere in Madrid, or the countless tiny village churches, heavily decorated with bright paintings and gilded statuettes.

My somewhat ascetic Protestant taste was satisfied by the ungilded, cream marble pillars and the tall plain-glass windows, the only decoration being a modern tondo (an altar-piece set in a round



FILE PHOTO

The Moncloa district of Madrid.

frame) celebrating a visit of Pope Pius XII, who was Pope during World War II and a friend of Franco.

The effect of the building was almost north German or Danish in its simplicity, from which a pleasant memory of incense, lingering from the morning's Mass, did not detract.

Mixed congregation, but a one-man show

But the congregation was far from simple. Though not everyone wore "Sunday best," as would have been the case a generation ago, fur coats (still fashionable in Spain) were liberally sprinkled about the large congregation, most

of them worn by middle-aged and elderly women.

But there were also many young people, late teens and early 20s, some of them worshipping alone. Most people were dressed casually. Many of the young women were *pijos* – students from well-to-do families, who dress alike in British brand-name jackets, sweaters, jeans and scarves in the "English" style, which is now the height of fashion in Madrid.

The priest, an elderly, ramrod-straight man in simple vestments, took the whole service himself, with no overt contribution from the congregation other than the responses. This is unusual in my church, and I found it slightly disquieting, an echo from the authoritarian past.

In his sermon, as far as my Spanish allowed me to follow it, he spoke of the "Holy Family" and used Scripture to emphasize the importance of family in the new, materialist social order Spain had entered just a few years ago.

Spain is a fascinating country, ancient and modern, advanced and sometimes still backward (the many beggars can be aggressive, but also romantic, like the Andalusian gypsy I encountered on a suburban train selling handwritten copies of poems by Lorca), exquisitely cultured but coarse at the edges (Madrid's massive bullring at Las Ventas is full every day of the fighting season).

Now that the country has been released from the grip of a powerful state church, the people have put behind them the horrors of the centuries-long Inquisition and the recent fascist priests. As with France, Britain and the Netherlands, organized religion is no longer a dominant part of most people's lives.

Faith not dead

But my observation of the Spanish people is that many still enjoy a strong faith. The days of superstition are gone, in the middle-class cities at least. And unlike in other parts of Europe, the family is still an integral part of society.

That Mass on the last Sunday of the Millennium showed me that there are still many Spanish, young and old, with a sincere commitment to the Lord. (It was not an "important" Mass; they could have been elsewhere but were in church.) And Evangelical denominations, including American Baptist churches, are popular and becoming more so, in line with trends in northern Europe.

Jay Reay has a particular interest in Spain and its history and has travelled there previously. He lives near Oxford, England.



Conflict over Muslim law boils up in Nigeria

LAGOS, Nigeria (ENI/Compass) – As another Nigerian state moved toward setting up Islamic law, *sharia*, as its state law, Christians throughout the country marched through the streets of several major cities to protest the increasing Islamization of their country.

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) organized the protests to support Christians in six northern Nigerian states: Zamfara, Bauchi, Kano, Katsina, Yobe and Borno.

These six states have recently declared themselves Islamic states and are planning to or have recently implemented *sharia*. Zamfara has already passed the *sharia* into law and it was to have taken effect in early January.

The northern region of Nigeria is predominantly Muslim, while Christians dominate the states in the south. The *sharia* debate was

initially sparked by Zamfara Governor Ahmed Sani who said that "only death can stop me [from making *sharia* law]."

The continuing controversy surrounding *sharia* has heightened fears of religious persecution and riots and the disintegration of the country. As individuals, both Christians and Muslim women oppose the legalization of the *sharia*.

Threat to democracy

Sunday Mbang, president of the CAN argues that *sharia* is a threat to democracy itself. "It would deny non-Muslims their fundamental rights and create disaffection among various groups in the country and endanger the peaceful co-existence of the citizens."

According to *sharia*, women are not free to move or earn a free wage. As a result, many bus drivers in Zamfara are refusing to transport women, leaving them

stranded. Business is beginning to suffer because traders, most of whom are Christians from southern states, are returning to their home states for fear of persecution when the law takes effect.

The use of *sharia* has caused disunity and an atmosphere of instability in the formerly unified country. The move to set up *sharia* comes six months into President Olusegun Obasanjo's first term.

Obasanjo, a Christian, has seen the rise of ethnic tension and a continued vying for power between the economically powerful southern states and the northern states, which have dominated military and civil administration since colonial times.

Setting up *sharia* is a political move, some say, aimed at asserting northern authority amid fears that Obasanjo is favoring the south.

This "could lead to the disintegration of the country," said Angli-

can Bishop Emmanuel Mani. We have lived peacefully hitherto without agitation. Why would some people suddenly use religion, which is a sensitive issue, to divide the nation and weaken the unity of this country?"

Beyond the limits

Although the 1999 Constitution declares that "no state or federal government can adopt a state religion," Nigeria's minister of justice and attorney general Joseph Agabi said that "the constitution permits its [*sharia*]'s limited application in personal and family issues. But states have gone beyond that."

Now, many, including Christians, are critical of how Obasanjo is handling the "sensitive" issue because nothing has been done to counter the northern states move toward the legalization of *sharia*.

Because of that, CAN has written to the Nigerian attorney gen-

eral to challenge the imposition of the law. CAN has also demanded that Nigeria withdraw from the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a Saudi-Arabian-based group of 52 Islamic countries. "Nigeria's membership in OIC was unexplainable because of the multi-religious nature of the country," said Anglican Bishop Rev. Ayo Ladigbolu.

On the Muslim side, a former Muslim deputy governor of Lagos state, Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu, says that there is nothing unconstitutional about *sharia*. "One point we have to get clear is that you cannot be a Muslim without *sharia*, because *sharia* is the law ... for those who call themselves Muslims. We as Muslims believe that Nigeria is a multi-religious society and we are not asking that *sharia* be imposed on non-Muslims, so there is nothing unconstitutional about *sharia*."

Church

Christian Copts killed in Egypt in conflict with Muslims

AL-KOSHEH, Egypt (Religion Today) — Police stood by as Muslims beat and killed Coptic Christians and looted their homes and stores in al-Kosheh, Egypt, in the week of December, Christians in the region said.

Security forces have been patrolling the area since Jan. 1, but more than 20 Christians have died, 10 are reported missing, and scores of homes and shops have been destroyed in three villages in Dar al-Salam municipality, Upper Egypt, news reports say.

"That is the disturbing fact. The violence continues — more Christians were killed yesterday, despite heavy police presence in those villages," Joseph Assad of the Center for Religious Freedom at Freedom House told Religion Today. Assad, an Egyptian, said he has been in daily contact with sources in the area, including Coptic Bishop Wissa.

Police watched as Muslims stormed two Christian homes in al-Kosheh and killed the families, U.S. Copts, a human rights group, said. "We know exactly what is going on from the mouths of people living there. We are speaking hourly with them," the group's Michael Meunier said.

Police are feared

Christians in al-Kosheh fear the police because of past persecution, Assad said. More than 1,000 Christians were arrested, interrogated and tortured by police in a 1998 murder investigation that some said was an attempt to frame Christians. "The international media has neglected to mention that many of the police dispatched to the area are the same ones who went there and tortured many Christians in 1998," Assad said.

It is the worst case of violence against Christians in Egypt in 20 years, Assad said. Egypt's Interior Ministry confirms 20 dead, but Coptic-rights advocate Mamdouh Nakhla said the number rose to 28 when five more died of wounds and three bodies were found in a field, Reuters said.

The government said 33 Christians have been injured and 33 of their stores looted, but Meunier said about 100 stores have been destroyed.

"I was sitting in my field with eight relatives," Morqos Rushdie al-Gindi, a Christian farmer, told Reuters. "Three Muslim neighbors came and fired on us. They killed all of my relatives. I thought I was

dead. I only regained consciousness in hospital." A Christian school teacher said she saw 50 men throwing gasoline bombs at Christian houses between the village of al-Balabish and al-Kosheh.

'No discrimination'

Some Christians have retaliated, Reuters said. A group stopped a school bus carrying Muslim and Christian children, ordered the Muslims off, and beat them with pipes, Ahmed Ali Eid, 13, said. About 40 people have been detained or arrested.

"Extremist elements" on both sides are to blame for the violence, officials said.

Members of Egypt's Cabinet met to discuss how to prevent further violence. About 75 per cent of al-Kosheh's 23,000 residents are Christian and it is the largest of several Christian villages in the municipality of Dar al-Salam. Violence could spread to a dozen nearby villages "in a matter of hours," Assad said.

The Cabinet said Egypt "knows no discrimination between Muslims and Christians," but Christians disagree. Islam is the state religion and fundamentalists are forcing a greater Islamization of society, Operation World says. Christians are denied the same education and job opportunities as Muslims, and religious police keep close watch on Christian activity, it says.

Christian churches can't build new buildings or repair the outside of existing structures without a special decree from the president, rights groups said.

Converts persecuted

Converts from Islam to Christianity are persecuted. Parents who become Christians can lose custody of their children and their extended families may be discriminated against, the American Coptic Association says. Christian women are targeted for "forcible reconversion" which sometimes involves rape and forced marriage, it said.

Christians make up 10 to 15 per cent of the population in the country of 64 million people. The Orthodox Coptic Church dates back to the time when Egypt was a province of the Roman Empire. Tradition holds that the Apostle Mark brought Christianity to the country, which was taken over by Arab Muslims in 641.

The 'conclusion' of the Lord's Prayer isn't the conclusion

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matt. 6:13b, KJV)

Those of us who are a part of the Reformed or other Protestant traditions think of these familiar words as the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples to pray in the Sermon on the Mount. These words are so familiar to many Christian believers, and so intimately bound up with their piety and spirituality, that it comes as a shock to learn that they were probably never spoken by Jesus.

The fact is that the earliest Greek manuscripts of the Gospels do not contain these words, and that they were almost certainly added by scribes living hundreds of years after New Testament times. Paradoxically, what we think of as "the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer," was probably not part of the Lord's Prayer at all.

The King James Version of the New Testament, like all other biblical translations until the 19th century, was based on the Greek text as it is found in medieval manuscripts — handwritten copies which were separated by more than a thousand years from the originals written by the evangelists and apostles.

Although these medieval manuscripts were on the whole very reliable, they did contain some variations in wording which had crept in over the centuries of copying and recopying. Usually these variations are not significant, and can be corrected by comparing the different manuscripts with each other, but in the case of Matthew 6:13b this was not possible until the 19th century, since all the manuscripts known until that time had the familiar wording which we have quoted.

New manuscript discoveries

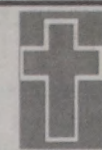
However, things changed with the discovery of a number of important manuscripts which had been unknown before. These newly discovered Greek manuscripts were much older — something like a thousand years older than the manuscripts that had been used before — and they all had in common that they were missing these familiar words.

Today almost all biblical scholars agree that these older manuscripts are more likely to be right than the later ones, with the result that virtually all modern translations (like the NIV) do not include the well-known "conclusion" of the Lord's Prayer.

What probably happened was this. Around the fourth century A.D. Greek-speaking Christians began to close all their prayers with the formula "For

Chapter & Verse

Al Wolters



thine is the kingdom," etc. The wording of this formula was based on 1 Chronicles 29:11-13, and was thus quite biblical in spirit.

Since it was used to conclude all prayers, it was also added when people recited the Lord's Prayer. Nothing wrong with that. But then the Christian scribes who copied biblical manuscripts, when they got to the Lord's Prayer in the manuscripts they were copying, would write what they were used to saying in their daily prayers, and thus inadvertently began to include the traditional "conclusion" as part of the biblical text which they were copying.

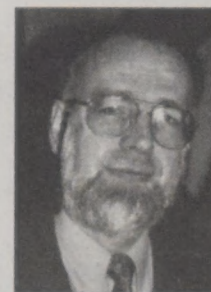
As a result, from the 5th century onward, more and more biblical manuscripts incorporated these words, until by the end of the Middle Ages every scribe included them. And from these late manuscripts this concluding formula found its way into all the new translations which were made in the 16th and 17th centuries, including the King James Version.

An insertion—but still 'biblical'

Of course, the fact that the words which we have been discussing probably did not belong to the original Lord's Prayer does not mean that they do not express biblical truth. It is certainly true that kingship, power and glory belong to God, and there is nothing wrong with using this confession as a fitting appendix to the Lord's Prayer. The point is only that it is most probably just that — an appendix — and not an integral part of the prayer as Jesus taught it.

Does all of this mean that we should stop saying these words when we recite the Lord's Prayer (as Catholics now do)? Or does it mean that we should delete Question and Answer 128 from the *Heidelberg Catechism*?

Personally, I think not. Since the words are themselves biblical, I believe we can continue to use them, provided that we are conscious of the fact that they are not, strictly speaking, part of the Lord's Prayer.



Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ontario. One of his interests is textual criticism, which seeks to establish the most reliable text of the Bible by comparing the wording of the different manuscripts.

If we had no winter,
the spring would not
be so pleasant.
Puritan poet Ann Bradstreet



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Reconciliation

'Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.'

Gerald Vandezande

Whether we like it or not, we are immersed in a broken world which has succeeded in securing an abundance of material wealth for many, but which has obviously failed to share equitably with millions of needy neighbors.

In this violent culture and wasteful society, God calls all of us to be dynamic, living demonstrations of the Good News.

We are involved in an economic and political order which is strong in promoting corporate and military power and putting its trust in profits and weapons of war but which is weak in pursuing justice and peace and following the Prince of Peace.

We participate in a socio-economic system which is aggressive in conquering new frontiers but which is regressive in conserving creational resources and advancing

human well-being.

We are members of a society that is shaped by social, economic and political structures which claim to be among the most tolerant, equitable, and democratic anywhere but which often are among the most exploitive and racist, oppressive and discriminatory when it comes to dealing with the poor and the needy, the hungry and the refugee, the Native peoples and various minorities – the 21st century versions of the biblical widows and orphans who have no real home and no safe haven, who have little or no food and hardly any protection, who are often voiceless and very vulnerable.

Being salt, leaven, light

In this violent culture and wasteful society, God calls all of us, all our institutions and organizations too, to be dynamic, living demonstrations of the Good News. In the midst of widespread bleakness and misery, Jesus challenges us to be faith-filled servants of the way, the truth, and the life. In this hurting and divided world, the Spirit commands each and every-



LEEDMAN'S BOOK OF FAMOUS PRAYERS

"Blessed are you who show compassion for the refugees from Africa, Asia and Latin America."

one of us, and all of us together, to be a healing and reconciling presence: "Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). Or as the prophet Micah puts it: "Do justice, show mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (6:8). Or, as Jesus challenges: be "leaven," "light" and "salt" in the world, not an added burden or a useless image of it. "Practice justice, mercy, faithfulness and love" (Matthew 23:23 and Luke 16:14).

We cannot, in good faith, avoid this God-given human calling. We must accept our personal and communal responsibility and seek God's coming reign of justice and peace everywhere. Indeed, to develop stewardly economic life and equitable social structures is easier said than done. We live in a wounded world, our environmental and economic troubles are serious, and our political and social divisions run deep. Furthermore, our media commentators, economists and politicians often seem to be at their wits' end. They frequently appear to have more questions than answers, and even their ambitions and solutions often are rather selfish and short-sighted. All the more reason to do good, to seek justice and peace!

More than absence of conflict

Shalom, the Hebrew word for peace, means more than the absence of conflict, hostility, strife or war of any kind. *Shalom* implies the presence of harmony and unity, integrity and reconciliation, justice and mercy. It is the fruit of

the Spirit which makes for a peaceful life in Christ, for Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6), who gives the peace which passes all understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Jesus said it so powerfully in his well-known Beatitudes. I will paraphrase a few of them and put them in our 21st-century context.

Blessed are you ...

Who are hungry and homeless, poor and powerless, weak and voiceless;

Who show solidarity with the vulnerable, both at home and abroad;

Who mourn over death and destruction in Kosovo and Rwanda;

Who show compassion for the refugees from Africa, Asia and Latin America;

Who handle God's good creation with love and care everywhere;

Who demonstrate respect for the Native communities in North America;

Who love and practise the truth in education and the media;

Who love and practise stewardship in economics, and justice in politics;

Who are peace-makers and justice-seekers rather than power-grabbers and war-mongers;

Who trust the Prince of Peace rather than weapons of war;

Who are exploited and arrested, tortured and killed, because they remind repressive regimes to do justice and show mercy;

Who are abused and persecuted, reviled and slandered, because they won't deny the Name in China or hide the Light in North America;

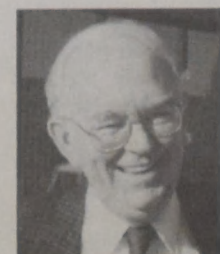
... Who walk humbly with God!

We are at a crossroads. We must daily choose whom we will serve: the living and true God or the dead and false idols of our time. We can either follow true ways of life or false ways of death.

The way of the Cross and the Resurrection is open. It does not end up in blind alleys and dead-end streets.

The way of the Cross and the Resurrection is open. It does not end up in blind alleys and dead-end streets. It is the God-given way of hope, of grace and mercy, of light and life in a world filled with despair and destruction, darkness and death. The choice is ours. The challenge cannot be avoided.

Let's embrace and practice peace. Indeed, let's "do good, seek peace, and pursue it." Then we will enjoy God's blessing in this new year!



Gerald Vandezande lives in Agincourt, Ontario, and says he is "semi-retired" from Canadian politics. He was formerly the public affairs director for Citizens for Public Justice.

The Lord Dresses the Wounds of His People

*You and I are a wordless prayer
baking God in each kiss,
as our spirits become bread
and we eat.*

*Painfully we waited
for this ceremony, waited
to be robed in a new Eucharist
of truth, the solemn ceremony
of eyes, lips, arms, hands,
transfiguration.*

*Tatters of the immoral morals
we have worn
lie scattered at our feet
as we, freshly clad in joy,
touch the deepest purpose
of creation.*

*I raise you to the sky
and you raise me
praying,
this is my body.
Take and eat.*

Mary Elizabeth Lauzon

Reconciliation

Peace from the inside out

Cynthia Legette Davis

I was tired – tired of race being such a factor in our lives. For as long as I could remember I had looked around me and wondered why people of different races could not get along; I yearned for the day when we would.

I was angry – angry because it seemed as though the more things changed, the more they stayed the same. In fact, race relations were getting worse instead of better. I wanted so much to make a positive difference, but felt so powerless to change anything.

Then, an answer came from what I believe now was the voice of God. It said: "Peace, be still." It told me that if I wanted to help bring about racial harmony in this world, I had to first be at peace within myself.

I felt convicted by a truth that had never occurred to me before: that racial harmony is an individual decision, not a group effort. One-by-one we not only *make* the difference, but we *are* the difference in this world based on the condition of our own hearts.

Starting over

This was a great revelation for me that at first I didn't understand, or maybe didn't want to understand. I had always imagined myself to be a basically good person, and yet I knew that what God was telling me was true: I needed to examine my own heart first if I really wanted to make a positive difference.

I didn't know how to begin. There were so many confused feelings, so many false beliefs which somehow, somewhere along the way I had allowed myself to buy into as my own. I discovered that I didn't know myself, didn't trust myself, didn't love myself. I thought I did, but I didn't.

With this realization, I went to work on myself. I began to pray as I had never prayed before for direction, clarity, forgiveness. I began to read the Bible and many other sources, looking for comfort and answers.

I felt so ashamed of how confused I had allowed my life to become. What was worse, I felt that I had really let God down. And because I felt I had let God down, I couldn't imagine that he could actually love me. So many things convicted me as being lost and confused, but most all as being a hypocrite for saying I loved God but acting to the contrary.

I prayed, cried, read, meditated; and cried, read, prayed and cried again. I began writing down my thoughts as they occurred to me: they were too much for me to carry around in my head and heart any longer. I wrote it all down as brief notes in a small pad I carried with me for two years.

In time, I came to believe what God had been telling me all along. I had simply been too blind to see and to deaf to hear. I came to know that God loves me whether I'm right or wrong. With all of my imperfections, he loves me unconditionally and always. He loves us

all that way. It was only when I had come to believe this truth, not just know it intellectually, that I was finally able to embrace (and then share) the insight God had given me.

Unexpected consequence

I realized the answers had come in the form of the expressions I had been writing in my little notepad. I initially thought they were just for me to see. I had never intended anyone else to read them, but I came to believe that what I had discovered might be helpful to others. The result was a book: *Peace Be Still: Inner Healing for Racial Harmony*, which was published in December 1998.

Although my book is increasingly reaching people, I know that my inner and outer work is just beginning. The difference now is that I have a greater peace with God and a much more obedient heart. With that, just as God told me I would, I believe I am making a positive difference.



Cynthia Legette Davis is editor-in-chief and co-publisher of South Carolina Business Vision magazine. Her book is available at:

Unications-publishing.com and in

bookstores. Her e-mail address is: mail@unicationspublishing.com



"I began to pray as I had never prayed before for direction, clarity, forgiveness. I began to read the Bible and many other sources, looking for comfort and answers."

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Reflections on Nature/Agriculture

Stepping out of time:

Reflections on a blizzard

John Krueger

The Weather Channel reporter's lips were pursed and her voice apologetic as she broke the bad news about the snowstorm. This was more than a weather report; a whole worldview was sneaking in alongside her concern about nature messing up our plans.

The narrow TV lens had reduced the weather to an issue of convenience. I imagined a weather report that broke free from such pragmatism: "Today the trees will clap their hands in praise to the exalted Creator. Get outside and see the sculpted drifts while they are still fresh. Today the purity of white will cover the land like a prayer shawl..."

I snapped out of my reverie and peered through the window. While, according to the newscaster, Mayor Mel Lastman of Toronto was calling out the armed forces to dig out his city, I headed to the woods around Christie Lake.

An antidote to noise pollution

After plowing through the deep snow for an hour, I flopped down in a drift and watched the flakes being scattered from the hand of a generous Provider – the currency of heaven. Snow whirled through the branches, making the wind visible and audible. The wind's deep bass raged and roared through the oaks; the hiss and swish of the white pine were punctuated by the crackle and creek of a thousand

branches bending, snapping, and tossing black twigs onto the snow. "He sends his icy crystals. Who can stand against his cold?"

A blizzard creates a kind of natural silence (white music) as an insulator against mechanical noise pollution, which has climbed to new heights of absurdity. Some time ago I heard a motor which combined the rip-roaring blare of a chainsaw with the whine of a vacuum cleaner. I thought a movie crew was shooting a sci-fi flick and flung open my drapes. An alien dressed in green work clothes had a motor strapped to his back; he grasped a long black plastic tube and blasted leaves into a pile. His head was fitted with bright orange sound mufflers – this new form of "raking" could cause hearing loss.

My first encounter with a leaf-blower made me wish I had been watching a movie. Perhaps the noise of an internal combustion engine gives us a sense of power. This must have been true for the guy who roared past me on a snowmobile on his way around Christie Lake. The snow tailed out behind him in a fury, but I wondered how much he really saw.

After hiking out of the woods on the north shore, I spotted a desolate picnic table, took out my thermos of coffee and watched crystalline drift perform Pierrettes across the open reaches. Then I heard the gabbling.

Hundreds of Canada Geese squatted on the icy barrens. Suddenly their wings beat hard against

the driving snow and they lifted off as if in slow motion. I jumped up from the table and ran to the shore as the undulating skein of black dots faded into an impressionist sky. And I remembered a recent plane trip I took.

Lacking the will to wonder

In the distance, mountainous cumulus clouds loomed like icebergs in the Arctic Ocean. Of course we don't need to fly above the clouds to be dazzled; the sky is not just "up there." It begins at our feet, and we are, in fact, walking through "sky." But as Abraham Heschel has said, "What we lack is the will to wonder."

When I was 30,000 feet up, it appeared he was right. Even those passengers with window seats preferred to stick their noses in glossy magazines, seeking things far below.

The geese were out of sight now. My cheeks stung and eyes watered, but I felt more alive than I had all week. I dug through my coat sleeve to uncover a watch. The sun was setting behind the pines on the western ridge, but the day had seemed timeless.

I had forgotten that sense of being driven by my schedule and those urgent demands which too often kidnap what is truly important.

I had forgotten my computer, that machine which we had hoped would help us do our work faster so that we would have more time.

I had forgotten my date book, and those pages we often turn like a bible because busyness is next to godliness.

By the usual standards my hike hadn't accomplished much. But during that blizzard, it was enough to forget time and simply look at my footprints in the snow.

John Krueger is a career counsellor at Redeemer College and a freelance writer in Ancaster, Ontario.

Neither gloom and doom nor pie in the sky for farmers

COUNTRY COUNTERCULTURE

VERN M. GLEDDIE



People who make a living from the land – in order to survive and to contribute to the lives of others – must be realistic in their assessments. However, that may mean that they are seen to be complainers. Pierre Trudeau, when prime minister, attached that label to us farmers and conveniently ignored us.

Let me give a classic example of "pessimism" which is, in fact, realism. Some years ago while visiting my father's ranch I commented on the unusually heavy growth of grass on the range. "Yes," he replied, "it's just right for a prairie fire."

To an outsider my father's reply might have seemed negative, and governed by an attitude which expects the worst.

Instant devastation

But my dad knew from experience the devastation that could be wrought by a wildfire lit by sparks from a passing train or a cigarette butt tossed from a car. A year's supply of grazing and stored winter feed, fences, buildings and even livestock could be gone in hours. The resulting financial burden could mean losing the ranch. So Dad planned (and no doubt prayed).

"Fire guards" were ploughed along roads and railroads to prevent fires from spreading. Areas reserved for winter grazing were similarly protected. Grazing patterns were altered so that grass was used evenly over the range. Vigilance was the order of the day. Dad did what he could to prevent catastrophe.

Furthermore, the concern was not merely with the immediate effects of a fire, but with its long-term consequences as well. Planning took into account long-term survival. A phrase often repeated by my father was: "It takes grass to make grass."

A good crop of grass in any given year is necessary to a good crop the following year. The root system is nourished by the grass growing above ground, and any grass remaining by next season falls to the ground to decompose and enrich the soil. Thus, a fire can have long-term effects. My

father thought of possible negative consequences. But that came out of a positive context of experience, knowledge and action directed towards the most positive desire for survival. This is realism.

Aligning with God's 'realism'

The over-arching reality is that eventually we must come to terms with the fact that God is sovereign over every square inch of creation. Satisfaction will come through alignment of practice with God's will with regard to the earth, all that grows there, its creatures and its people.

We do have to deal with thorns, thistles, sorrow and pain. Our humanity is fallen too, and that always affects thoughts and actions. The joy is in realizing that God has instituted an order for life and that within that, he gives his children the opportunity, and even desire, to work.

We are created with a mind; therefore God expects his children to think, even though our thinking is always to some degree faulty or incomplete. We must deal with the "prairie fire," which today could be any issue which may sweep over all of us, such as a trade agreement or new technology. It requires analysis and assessment against a dependable standard.

Important issues require public discussion because we will all be affected. The result of all of this may be praise or criticism, and a decision either for or against a system or technology. Genetic engineering is a good example of a current controversial issue which requires much more study and public scrutiny before sanction.

Farmers have legitimate complaints and also things to be thankful for. Realism, contrary to positivism or optimism, takes both into account. Negativism and pessimism aren't even in the picture.



Vern Gledie owns and operates a sheep ranch near Edmonton, Alberta.

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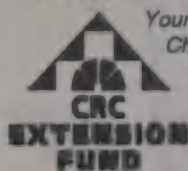
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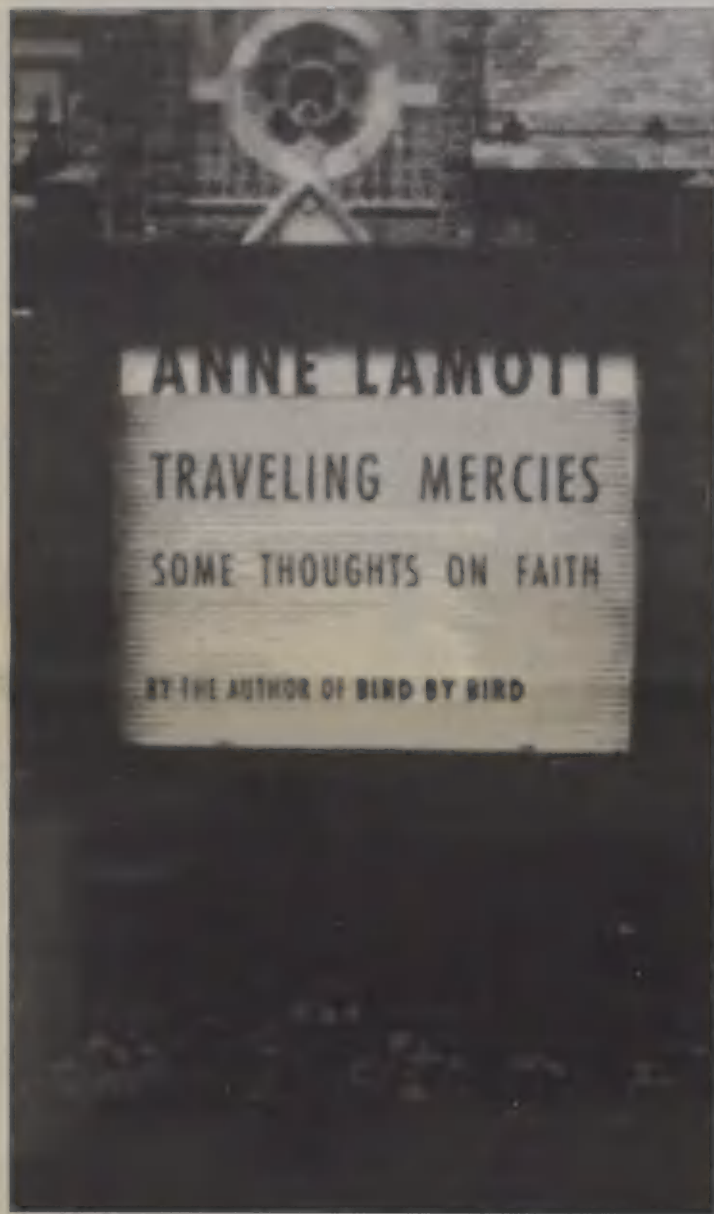
Not your ordinary 'personal testimony'

James R. Payton

Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith

By Anne Lamott.

New York: Pantheon Books, 1999. 275 pp. \$23 (U.S.).



Some spiritual autobiographies can be puzzlingly disappointing. The "personal testimony" which has become a mainstay of much North American evangelicalism is a case in point.

Having grown up with the phenomenon, I was taken aback but impressed by the accuracy of an observation made by a Dutch immigrant businessman who served as an elder in our church.

Having heard many of these — in church, on television and in various other venues — he commented to me: "Isn't it strange that all these people's lives become boring as soon as they become Christian?"

Sturdy Calvinist that he was, he was not yearning for more sala-

cious spice, but for a sense that the interesting stuff of life does not end, but begins, with conversion. I think he would have liked Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies*.

Never a dull sentence

Some spiritual autobiographies are profoundly stimulating. C.S. Lewis' *Surprised by Joy* is startlingly fresh, aflush with the sense of human resistance but gently sovereign grace.

St. Augustine's *Confessions* is suffused with humility and awe, resplendent with doctrinal profundity. Yet God capped off his pursuit of the one who would be the most profound theologian Western Christendom has ever known with the words of a child's game: "Tolle

et lege" — "Take and read." Anne Lamott's *Traveling Mercies* does not have the "hounds of heaven" sense of C.S. Lewis' work; nor does it have the doctrinal depth of *Confessions*. But it is a marvelously written, deliciously humorous, painfully honest, self-deprecatingly straightforward presentation, not just of life before conversion, but especially of growth in life afterwards.

By the time she became a Christian, Anne Lamott was a successful novelist, and her literary abilities serve her and her readers well in this volume: there is not a dull sentence in the entire book.

Grew up with atheism, apathy

Anne Lamott grew up in the home of an atheist father soured on his Presbyterian missionary-family upbringing and a mother with no identifiable spiritual concern. Deference to paternal predilections marked the family — and Anne was genuinely devoted to her father, as this book indicates.

Even so, as a young child she prayed at night in her bed, somehow knowing that there *must* be someone out there listening and caring.

She recounts her ragtag experiences of practiced religion, from the Roman Catholic family with whom (as an overnight visitor) she sometimes went to mass, through a friend's mother's Christian Science solitudes, through her own commitment in a college-age feminist *bat' mitzvah* put on for her by her non-religious Jewish friends, through her reluctant conversion to Christianity.

Lamott was drawn by the music of the scruffy little Presbyterian church in her neighborhood: the singing of the predominantly African-American congregation was so suffused with a full range of human emotion and genuine devotion that she was drawn in by it, learned to sing along, and eventually began to stay for the sermon.

Enough got to her that she realized that the personal presence she sensed dogging her steps in her uneasiness was none other than Jesus himself. Her moment of conversion, in her own words, went like this:

I opened the door to my houseboat, and I stood there a minute, and then I hung my head and said, "F--- it: I quit." I took a long deep breath and said out loud, "All right. You can come in." So this was my beautiful moment of conversion (p. 50).

Hardly a conventional prayer of conversion. Not at all the fastidi-

ous utterance of polite piety, this prayer launched Anne Lamott onto the wonders and struggles of Christian living, which she recounts so delightfully in her book.

Traveling Mercies is a travelogue of an adventure of living before God, an adventure which compels the author to observe, "I do not at all understand the mystery of grace — only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us" (p. 143).

This spiritual autobiography is clearly a story rooted in the late 20th century, as the easy references to the feminist movement, to single parenthood, and to the kinds of struggles women have in contemporary North American culture all indicate.

But the story is also timeless: concerns with being too protective a parent, trying to understand complicated relationships with and legacies from parents, and the general messiness of life all reflect the human condition in any age.

Traveling Mercies is written with a refreshing verve — humorous and wise, not in turn, but at the same time; startlingly candid and self-effacing; wide-ranging in sympathies for being genuinely human, but attuned to fine points of self-deception.

The book is awash in insights, but the style is never "preachy" or moralistic: Anne Lamott takes us along on her journey and makes comments in passing, but the comments show how much she has learned — and how much we can learn with her.

Humorous and wise

Lamott has a pungently self-deprecating approach: she does not hesitate to expose her foibles in a wide range of human insecurities, and with considerable candor. But this self-exposure ends up focusing on the little steps God takes with her to enable her to cope a little better.

Sometimes the point comes across with the effortless humor which exudes from this book; often, the observations present a wisdom that demands reflection, and appreciation for artful expression.

What the author wrestles with is not restricted to personal follies, though, and this makes the book more than just what used to be said of history, that it was "moral philosophy teaching by example."

One instance is the way the author struggles with deadly illnesses: cystic fibrosis in her friends' young daughter, terminal breast cancer in a lifelong friend. She refuses to "let God off the hook" in this with some shallow affirmations about "for the good";

it is not that she doubts such teaching, but that genuine struggling with someone's catastrophe won't content itself with superficialities which serve more often to deflect than to deal with grief and pain.

This volume is not for the moralistically uptight or the fastidiously traditional. Lamott's language can be coarse by conventional Christian standards; four-letter words are not unwelcome intruders into the vocabulary of this Christian writer. However, unless the word police are as honest before God and as concerned for his image-bearers as Anne Lamott clearly is, someone should keep quiet — and it is not Anne Lamott.

As well, the author is utterly candid about her weaknesses (including addictions to alcohol and drugs), her obsessions (bulimia and the physical self-preoccupation demanded of females in our culture), and various insecurities continuing long after her conversion.

Will be disconcerting to some

If a person cannot fathom how one can be a Christian and yet have such struggles — and much of the literature on the Christian life presents such a Shangri-La — then Lamott's volume would be profoundly disconcerting.

Further, when the author refers to God as "he or she," some might be offended.

The author's unselfconscious but idiosyncratic ways of relating to God might startle some readers, too: writing brief prayers to God about her questions and putting them into the drawer of her nightstand, calling it "God's In-box," is something wide of traditional piety, indeed. For those with eyes to see, though, it is a refreshingly contemporary approach of a trusting daughter to her heavenly Father.

In this recounting of her journey, aptly sub-titled "Some Thoughts on Faith," Anne Lamott takes one of the most hackneyed phrases of evangelical piety and fills it with the wonder of exploration. *Traveling Mercies* is a delightful book, one that will bring the reader to tears, laughter and reflection. There are not many spiritual autobiographies that so richly reward reading. *Tolle et lege*.



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How to read the Bible

Reading the Bible: Anybody can do it!

Louis Tamminga

Do you read the Bible regularly? Does your Christian community read the Bible regularly?

There is in Reformed circles, and in other Christian traditions too, a renewed interest in personal Bible reading. The Bible is read, studied, and discussed, at home, at church and elsewhere. So we have reason to be grateful. But we must, alas, also observe losses.

"We don't so readily associate serious Bible reading with having a good time. This unique book of God demands a unique reading effort."

The number of individuals and families who read the Scriptures at mealtime, as was once practised widely, is dwindling fast. I would venture that less than half of all young married Christians have begun to practise reading the Bible at mealtimes. A degree of spiritual impoverishment will inevitably result. Children will grow up in whose lives Bible reading is an unfamiliar activity. And knowledge of biblical teaching and biblical history will be minimal.

Rediscover the Bible

Not every part of the Bible makes fascinating reading. Not every part is readily understandable. And not every part will be of immediate impact on our lives. But isn't it amazing that some 2000 years after the Bible was completed it is still the most printed—and most read—book in the world?

And isn't it equally amazing that the biblical writings which were produced by many writers over a 1200-year span display a wonderfully harmonious unity of content and purpose? And that the writings in those 66 books address us personally in this modern age with deeply compelling urgency and relevance? Those steeped in the secrets of the Word know this as a miracle of God's grace.

The Bible is a book of encounters, descriptions, confessions, rehearsals, confrontations and introductions. Here we meet God, learn who he is, learn who we are, submit to his claim and receive the gift of eternal life in his Son, Jesus Christ. Here we are consoled in our pain and distress and are instructed in godly living.

Most of us consider reading to be a pleasant past-time. However, we don't so readily associate serious Bible reading with having a

good time. As Bible readers we sense intuitively that we must not read the Bible in the same way as we read other literature. This unique book of God demands a unique reading effort. "The Bible is a hauntingly beautiful but a stubbornly difficult body of literature" (Donald Senior).

How God presents himself

Throughout history people have approached the Bible with certain pre-judgments about how it must be explained. In the early Christian church there were the allegorists who maintained that the biblical accounts of plain historic facts had a hidden spiritual meaning which only insiders could detect and explain.

Throughout history there were the moralists who culled wise lessons, both positive and negative, from the Bible for virtuous living. And from the Age of Rationalism on, there were those who saw the Scriptures as a collection of personal accounts of the writers' religious experiences in response to God's doings.

Consider the "problem" God faced as he pondered how to reveal himself to all the generations of all places of all ages. Human beings' cultural, educational and sociological situations would differ incredibly. How could he address, in the same book, so many people under such diverse conditions?

God made special provisions to make sure that all nations and tribes would have access to and could understand the burden of the divine message.

a. He would write through humans, so that the generations would read a human book.

b. The writers in their writing and the readers in their reading would be guided by his Holy Spirit. The writing would thus be true and dependable, and, basically, understandable, sufficient for finding the way of salvation.

c. The Spirit would see to it that the biblical message contained its own directions and explanations for the readers how to see and understand the Bible.

Gradually revealing the Messiah

So we need not come to the Bible with philosophical preconceptions on how to read it. But we do take note of special key texts, such as Gen. 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

That's where and how the battle lines are drawn. Gradually the



"Isn't it amazing that the biblical writings which were produced by many writers over a 1200-year span display a wonderfully harmonious unity of content and purpose?"

Bible introduces more details about the coming Messiah. Subsequent reading establishes that what happens in the four gospels was foretold in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament history finds its focus and orientation in Messianic preparation. We don't impose such a framework on the Bible from the outside. Rather, the Bible reveals to the reader that vision from its own pages.

The Old Testament frequently speaks of the Anointed of the Lord who is the coming Messiah. Examples are found in Psalm 2:2; 16:10-11; 18:50; 84:9; 89:38, 51; 132:10, 17, etc. Subsequent writings confirm the depth of Messianic hope and expectation: Num. 24:17-19; Lam. 4:20; Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 5:2-5; Is. 9:6-7; Dan. 9:25-26, etc.

The Old Testament priesthood finds a broad explanation in Hebrews 5. Hebrews 3 places a blessed connection between Moses and Christ. Acts 2:22-36 between David and Christ. Paul places a helpful perspective on Israel journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land by stating that Christ was among them (yes, the actual Word become Flesh; see 1 Cor. 10:1-4).

The creation account in Genesis 1 finds a deeper perspective in

John 1:1-14. Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 is a fine commentary on Old Testament events. Christ explains to the disciples on their way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35).

The myriad of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament text, completes the circle and establishes that Christ is the fulfilment of God's Old Testament doings. Thus we read the Old Testament as "history of redemption." That does not mean that every single detail of the Old Testament constitutes history of redemption, nor have all God's redemptive provisions been recorded in Scriptures. (For a helpful discussion see: *Reading the Bible as History*, by Theodore Plantinga, 1980. G.R. Welch, Burlington, Ont.).

Another theme that emerges throughout Scripture is the covenantal relationship between God and his people as an outcome of the great Messianic redemption. This covenantal slant is easily detectable (though to say that all biblical writings are covenantally slanted would be an overstatement).

By way of examples, please read: Gen. 9:12, 15-16; 15:18; 17:9-14; etc. They are confirmed in such New Testament passages as: Rom. 4:13, 17; Heb. 8:7-13, etc.

The Apostle Paul says that we mortals can never fully grasp all Scriptural riches: "For we know in part ... now we see but a poor reflection..." (1 Cor. 13:9-12). That's why our reading is a never-ending quest for spiritual growth and sanctification. And that's why some generations had a clearer grasp of God's revelation than did others.

But all those who come to the Word pleading God's grace, no matter how elementary their understanding, will experience the promise of Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Six suggestions

1. Read the Bible prayerfully. Remind yourself: this is God speaking. Respond in faith and gratitude. Pray about the message.

2. Cultivate the habit of pondering the message you read. This practice is Mary's great legacy to the followers of her Son (Luke 2:51).

3. Do read larger portions of the Word, perhaps an entire book, periodically. You will see broader connections, and unifying themes will become apparent to you.

4. Read confidently. You may find some parts hard to understand, but do not despair. Keep reading. God will give the increase in his time. You may find yourself suddenly overwhelmed with unworthiness. You may cry: "Who then can be saved?" But his mercy will triumph in you. No one who comes to the Bible in a humble spirit will be sent away empty.

5. Make sure you read passages in their wider context when seeking guidance from the Word in actual problems and trials. If possible, seek the advice of other mature Christians in understanding what you read. The Spirit often makes his will known through the collective, sanctified mind of the Christian community.

6. Read regularly. Don't let yourself be distracted. Have a plan: perhaps you may want to select certain books of the Bible (some books are indeed more suitable for personal reading than others). But you may also wish to read from cover to cover. There are resources available with suggestions for daily readings that encompass the entire Bible in a year.

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How to read the Bible

The crippled reader

Harry der Nederlanden

Jacob has come to a critical moment in his life. He is all alone now. Rachel and Leah, his two maidservants, his eleven sons, his herds of sheep, goats and cattle and all his possessions have gone on ahead.

He is left alone beside the river. The moon is but a sickle-shaped scar against the infinite darkness. The stars, however, are so plentiful they form ghostly sand drifts against the heavens, as if heaven and earth were inverted.

"Maybe they are," he thinks. "This should be my moment of triumph. I'm coming home a rich man, richer than my father, Isaac. Yet, I'm standing here trembling like a coward."

Powerless

The bleating donkeys in the distance seems to mock him. Esau is on his way with an army. What if Esau simply steals all the cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels and then slaughters Jacob's whole family? He has sworn to kill Jacob, and Jacob doesn't doubt for a moment that his fierce brother is capable of murder. To regain his birthright, Esau would have to kill not just Jacob but his sons as well.

"What did I gain by my deception?" Jacob moans. "I didn't need my father's goods, I made it all on my own, and now I'm about to lose it all. All my scheming and dreaming, all my years of serving Laban and working like a slave — all will come to nothing tonight."

His own cowardice depresses him. It's no use, his staying behind like this. If Esau wants to kill him, he will most certainly find him. But Jacob just trembles, powerless to go on.

At last, he prays. And then out of the darkness, a shape emerges. Esau? No, a stranger. Without uttering a word, the man seizes hold of him.

Profoundly mysterious

A strange, perplexing story. No matter how many times we've read it, no matter how many sermons we may have heard about it, the story remains profoundly mysterious.

Yet I think it tells us something about how to read the Bible. It may seem a bit paradoxical and circular to go to the Bible to learn how to read it. But we've all heard the rule: interpret Scripture with Scripture. It means, I think, that the Bible itself is the best guide on how to read it. I want to read the Jacob story in Genesis from this perspective.

Let's step back and look at Gen-

esis as a whole. It was written for the Israelites at a time when they were a people surrounded by many other peoples with strange gods. It was a time when they were in danger of mixing with them and losing their identity as God's elect. Genesis is a story that reminds them of their origins.

I chose the story of Jacob because he, too, is in the muddled middle when God visits him — assaults him — and gives him the name Israel. This episode, thus, binds Israel's identity with that of Jacob. And our identity is bound up with that of Israel.

Notice all the pairings: Jacob - Israel; Israel - Us; Us - Jacob. That's what we do when we try to make sense of stories; we draw equivalents, likenesses.

Pairings

The Jacob story contains many pairings or doublings. Such doublings occur throughout Genesis. So I am focusing on a very basic, simple literary structure. Likenesses prompt us to put different people, actions, and events side by side to make sense of them by comparing and contrasting them. Likeness or repetition with variations is a basic device in all the arts.

To speak only of the stories that precede this one, we have Cain and Abel, two brothers who both offer sacrifices to the Lord, one acceptable, the other not. Abram and Lot leave Ur together, one goes this way, the other that way. Abraham ends up with two wives and two sons: Sarah and Isaac become part of the covenantal line, Hagar and Ishmael are sent away.

Although they are twins, Jacob and Esau are very different from one another. It seems impossible to confuse them. But Jacob deceives his blind father, and he steals the blessing intended for Esau.

The theme of confusion or the erasure of differences has appeared before in Genesis — in the stories of the flood and of the Tower of Babel.

The story of the flood begins with a contrast, that between the sons of God and the daughters of men. The corruption occurs when the two mix and become indistinguishable. Then God separates Noah and his family from the corrupt mass and makes a new beginning.

Similarly, the building of the tower is a way for the people to preserve their identity, their sameness, not by being like God but by banding together to create an identity — a name — for themselves. The confusion of tongues that God

visits upon them is, thus, a mirror of their own confusion.

Like these tower builders, Jacob, too, is seeking an identity, an identity that aligns him with God. His act of deception threatens to create the same sort of confusion that happened before the flood and at the Tower of Babel. It reminds us of the exchange of *likeness* to God for *alikehood* by Adam and Eve in Paradise.

The Jacob story also uses likenesses with events in other stories. As in the story of Isaac and

more sons. It must have been a mini-Babel in Jacob's tents. God does not, however, abandon Jacob to the confusion of his own making.

If we have been careful, sensitive readers, however, comparing what asks to be compared by virtue of likeness, and struggling to understand the distinctions, separations and selections made by God as he works out his purposes in history, we are probably beginning to sympathize with Jacob. The course of the covenant line does not fol-

such a good fighter? Is it because he has been such an outstanding witness, a hero of faith?

Why does Jacob end up being crippled? Is it to show him that he has not been walking uprightly in God's way? Or is it to give him a permanent reminder that he is not, after all, a sound, independent traveller, able to stand on his own two feet?

At the very moment that Israel receives a new name and a blessing, it also receives a wound from the hand of God. And that same hand reaches out and touches our powers of interpretation.

Only the wounded, the crippled, the handicapped will understand this story.

We're not left in the dark

To understand is not to be able to bring all the different, diverging threads of this story into one comprehensive scheme that makes everything clear. To attempt this is to imitate what Abraham and Jacob both tried to do — to make God's ways conform to our own moral and political will. This does not, however, mean that we are left in the dark, crippled and caught in a maze.

Hebrews 11 says: "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff." Why is Jacob pictured leaning on his staff? Is it a subtle reminder that his faith did not heal his bad hip? Faith contains, as it were, a wounded moment within it, when we know ourselves to be incapacitated and look outside of ourselves to God's intervention.

I won't pretend to find in the climactic moment of the Jacob story all sorts of Messianic foreshadowings. But the Christian reader, knowing him- or herself to be incapacitated, also knows that God's own Son entered our darkness and was wounded for us; our faith looks forward in hope, to the light that has come. Our identity and our name is received from him who wrestled with God for our sake.

This is something we bring to this story. It is not superior knowledge, not a product of expert hermeneutics, but a gift of faith.

It is not necessary to come to Scripture equipped with all kinds of knowledge, tools, methods and theologies. These do play a role in the Christian community, for we do not read the Bible as so many disconnected individuals, but as part of the body of Christ. They must, however, follow and be subservient to a reading that humbles itself before God's Word.



Jacob wrestles with an angel.

Ishmael, one brother stays and one leaves.

Jacob is like Ishmael in that he is the one fleeing, but unlike Ishmael in that he is to be the vehicle of the covenant.

Jacob, urged on by Rebekah, acts like Abraham and Sarah when they attempted to help God to fulfill his promises by using Hagar as a surrogate. Similarly, although Rebekah has been told by God that Jacob will be the chosen vehicle of the covenant, mother and son resort to deception to make the promise come true.

These doublings take on almost farcical dimensions in Jacob's life. First, on his wedding night, he is deceived by his uncle Laban as he had deceived his own father, and he ends up marrying Rachel's older sister instead.

Then Rachel and Leah each repeat what Sarah did: they both give Jacob their handmaids as surrogates in an effort to produce

low any rational or ethical principle that we can discern.

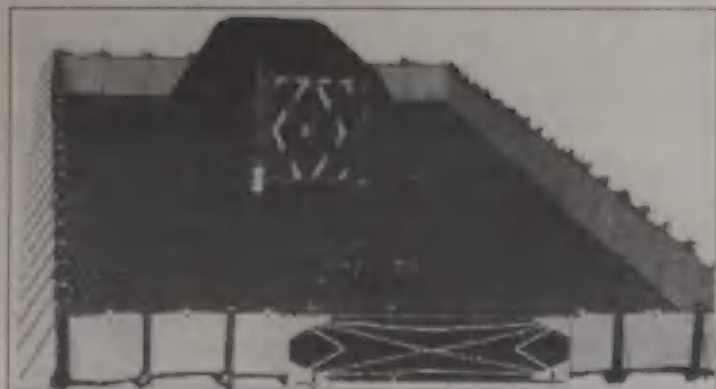
In novels, characters are compared and contrasted so that we judge one to be better than the other. Similar actions and events invite us to use our reason and our sense of right and wrong to decide who ought to be favored. We are tempted to impose some kind of interpretive principle to make our own sense of the story.

To a great extent, such a reading is thwarted in Genesis and in the story of Jacob. The more of our own competencies and capacities for judgment that we bring to bear on this story, the more opaque it becomes. In the climactic scene, when Jacob meets God face to face in a wrestling match, what does he learn?

Why does he get a new name here, a name that is applied to the people of God as a whole? Is it because he is returning to the promised land? Is it because he has been

How to read the Bible

Reading and hearing Leviticus



"Gather all the congregation together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. And the congregation was gathered together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.... Also Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them." Lev. 8:3-4, 10.

Arie C. Leder

Have you ever read through the book of Leviticus? Truth be told, Leviticus is not often used as sermon material, nor is much devotional literature based on it. Although certain texts receive regular attention — Chapter 19, which summarizes the law, and Chapter 25, on the year of jubilee — the rest of Leviticus tends to be heard in the church indirectly, if at all, through the book of Hebrews.

There are some reasons for the silence of Leviticus in the church. First, its practices are strange to us. The smells and sounds of sacrifices are not of our world; our blood and other body fluids do not play a role in our religious obligations; our dining practices are not prescribed; our religion, we feel, needs no priest, at least, not of the Old Testament type. This, coupled with a hermeneutics that teaches Christ's fulfillment of the law and its ceremonies, appears to legitimize Leviticus' silence.

Second, Leviticus' emphasis on rituals is problematic for those of us who are post-Reformation Christians of iconoclastic and anti-ritualistic convictions. Some scholars have contributed to this notion by arguing that genuine religion and religious leadership is spontaneous and charismatic, and that a religion of rituals and institutionalized, priestly leadership, reflects a deterioration in personal religion.

Such scholarly views still influence thinking about church leadership, personal devotion and corporate worship so that it is not uncommon for many to believe that spontaneity is truly spiritual, and that the prepared and traditional is uninspiring. Since Leviticus hardly contributes to spontaneous devotion, what can it say to us?

Finally, the rituals, practices, and images of Leviticus are not explained for the reader. How does

blood atone for sin? Why do certain diseases make you unclean? How can blasphemy against parents merit the death of the child?

In a culture whose dominant images are no longer informed by the Bible, whose practices increasingly leave no room for interaction beyond the human, and where the capacity for understanding the Bible's description of God's relationship to his people and the world is anorexic, Leviticus' speech falls on deaf ears.

But it need not. Let us attune our ears to hear what was written down for us "on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Let us remember that the Bible is not a book that came hot off the press yesterday, and that we need constantly to remind ourselves to read and hear all of the Scriptures.

I hope the following suggestions will be helpful to begin to read and hear the book of Leviticus.

Leviticus as a narrative

Although it does not look like it, Leviticus is a narrative, part of the story that goes back to Abraham and, ultimately, to Creation. Leviticus itself begins where Exodus ends. After the glory-cloud fills the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35), the narrative continues: "The Lord called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said:..." (Lev. 1:1).

God's speeches in Leviticus, then, are part of what happens at Sinai, which begins in Exodus 19 and ends in Numbers 10. In Leviticus 1 God no longer speaks from the top of Mt. Sinai, however, but from the tabernacle in the midst of Israel's daily living.

The consuming fire Israel saw from afar (Ex. 24:17) is now very near (Ex. 40:38). Indeed, God has become "incarnate" in his people's midst.

The God who destroyed Egypt with his presence, and who would have destroyed stiff-necked Israel were it not for Moses' intercession, now resides in the middle of Israel. And that makes all the difference for reading and hearing Leviticus, for Leviticus answers the question: How can God's people survive the blazing glory of God's presence?

The answer: Israel will be holy as it makes sacrifices, treats its diseases and body functions, eats food, and lives with its neighbors according to God's instructions. Paul so instructs the church in 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. Hebrews reminds us that our God is still a consuming fire, a good reason for faithful living (12:28, 29).

Distinctions of holiness

It is also important to remember that Leviticus assumes a clear separation between the covenant people and the rest of the nations. This teaching has its roots in God's separating Abraham from the nations, and even from his own family (Gen. 12:1).

At Sinai God redefined this separation from the nations when he revealed that Israel, by maintaining his instructions, would be his "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). Leviticus teaches Israel how to be holy by making the right distinctions:

I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations. You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground — those which I have set apart as unclean for you. You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own (Lev. 20:24b-26; and see Lev. 10:10-11; 11:47).

Leviticus 20 teaches that the distinctions by which Israel lives are like those God made between Israel and the nations.

These distinctions Leviticus impresses upon Israel's daily life: they will shape the sacrifices (Lev. 1-7), involve her diet, diseases, birth and bodily functions (Lev. 11-15), regulate her work in the fields (Lev. 19, 25), her sexual relationships (Lev. 18, 20), and the requirements for her priests (Lev. 8-10; 21-22).

Nothing escapes God's instructions, not what Israel puts into its mouth (Lev. 11), nor what comes out of it, as we see with the Israelite-Egyptian's blasphemy of God's name (Lev. 24:10-23; cf. Mark 7:14-23).

The distinctions God has given Israel protect it in God's inescapable presence. So, for example, after instructing Israel how to deal with the uncleanness of the bodily discharges of both men and women, God tells Moses: "You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them" (15:31).

Later on he instructs Moses: "I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name" (20:3).

Sin, uncleanness, unholiness, however defined for Israel in the levitical instruction, is not primarily an offense against a neighbor because it causes personal, social or environmental brokenness. Uncleanness offends God; it defiles his dwelling place and it mocks Israel's status as a distinct people.

Thus, even as Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden for having defiled the place where God walked, so now God's people, when they defile God's presence suffer the consequences. Levitical instruction seeks to keep the children of the covenant from repeating the sin of Adam and Eve by teaching them what makes them different from the nations, and why. (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1).

A priestly people

Leviticus is not a book by priests for priests alone; it provides instruction for a priestly people. From the opening instructions about the burnt offerings to the last chapter about redeeming what belongs to the Lord, Leviticus teaches God's people how to live safely in God's presence.

There are things only the priests are allowed to do: sprinkle sacrificial blood on the sides of the altar, place the sacrifice on the altar, or declare someone clean or unclean. But God's people themselves must place a hand on the altar, and themselves slaughter the victim at the time of the burnt offering (Lev. 1:4-5); those who have been affected by uncleanness have the responsibility to present themselves to the priest for the appropriate declaration (Lev. 13).

The priests teach the Word of the Lord (Lev. 10:10-11) by which all of God's people, including the priests themselves (Lev. 21-22), will live clean and holy lives in the presence of God. Whatever defiles the presence of God must be dealt with accordingly. Take some time

to read Leviticus 20:1-6 or 24:10-23.

Leviticus articulates the gritty cost of the priestly people's personal and communal discipline. Distinguished from the nations, this holy nation will not let the other nations define its identity or public activities (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-12).

Rather, it accepts the priestly calling that all God's people are responsible to work out their holiness with fear and trembling, for it is the God in their midst who will work in them both "to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

Leviticus need not be silent for



"Then Moses took some of the anointing oil and of the blood which was on the altar, and sprinkled it upon Aaron and his garments, and also upon his sons and his sons' garments; so he consecrated Aaron and his garments..." (Lev. 8:31)

us in the church. Let us read it in its narrative context, keeping in mind the importance of God's separation of his people from the nations, and holding to the commitment to live out the priestly instruction.

Find a good commentary to help. I recommend Gordon J. Wenham's *The Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) because he links Leviticus appropriately to the New Testament and because he is careful to let Leviticus itself speak to those who would hear.

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How to read the Bible

James Schaap talks about writing devotionals

Marian Van Til

When our editorial team began discussing an issue of CC which would deal with how we read the Bible, the subject of daily devotional books based on specific topics from, or parts of, the Bible came up. And a name which immediately sprang to mind was James Calvin Schaap. Schaap is a literature professor at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. But as many of our readers will know, he is also a novelist and short story writer. And a writer of Bible devotionals. We wondered how Schaap had gotten into this last form of writing, and what he might tell us about it. The following is based on a January 11 interview with him.



James Schaap

Jim Schaap writes with ease. He talks with ease too, his talking about himself and his writing a cheerful mixture of self-effacement and self-assurance. He needs no priming of the pump. Words pour forth in a relaxed, colloquial stream, often accompanied by rivulets of out-loud thinking to himself which seems to pool into reflective parenthetical musings.

Schaap's first volume of "devotionals" came out, he thinks, "around 1985." That volume was *Intermission*, and it was aimed at "families with seventh and eighth grade kids, just pre-high school." But he immediately adds, "I hate to really say that because a lot of older people have told me they liked it, and I don't want to make them feel bad." Nevertheless, the book was written with adolescents in mind, as were several subsequent ones.

Schaap said he didn't find it a particular challenge to write this kind of material for that age group. "I don't really know how to do it. It's what I've done since I started teaching. You take material that's over the head of your kids, and try to make it interesting. I even run into that with teaching T.S. Eliot to my college students. If I'm good at it it's because I've been a teacher."

Since Schaap teaches, summers are his major writing time, and *Intermission* was a big project for him, which took two or three years, as he recalls. He implies that he got into it by default, but that may not be quite true.

'They wanted a story teller'

"Essentially, with CRC Pubs [CRC Publications, the publishing arm of the Christian Reformed Church], just like with *Our Family Album* [a recent, dramatized traveling history of the denomination

written largely by Schaap], they wanted a story teller, not a theologian.

"They had a guy who taught theology, Dirk Bergsma, who taught at Westminster West [seminary in California]. He picked out the texts - we were working with about 150 or maybe 180 - he would choose passages with Old Testament and New Testament themes that he was interested in working on. I was just a hack.

"He was working with a Reformed approach to Scripture. What he did was not quite as Christological as *Promise and Deliverance* [which explains Bible passages as part of the comprehensive history of redemption], but he used that sort of theme to draw the Old and New Testament together. He did that to show the foreshadowing of Christ in the Old Testament."

Intermission consisted of about a school-year's worth of readings, and that's one reason "it went over big," Schaap thinks. None of his subsequent devotional books did as well.

An unusual aside

Then, prompted by thoughts of the Reformed emphasis on tying the Old and New Testaments together, Schaap goes off on a fascinating tangent. He wrote a book with Holocaust survivor Diet Eman called *Things We Couldn't Say*, in which she tells her harrowing story, which included being hidden for months by a Reformed family in the Netherlands.

Schaap says: "Since my involvement with Diet Eman I've been very interested in Holocaust survivors and in what made people decide to hide Jews. The French Calvinists were much more interested in Resistance and in hiding Jews than the French Catholics were. That's because the Calvin-

ists took the Old Testament very seriously. And so they took the Jews seriously."

Schaap then explains that well-known evangelical author and TV personage James Dobson interviewed Eman, was quite taken with her and her story, and decided to use the book as a promotion on his television program. "They ordered 10,000 copies," he chuckles.

And then he adds a concluding remark at which he's still obviously amazed: "After that, we were up to Number 58 on amazon.com's sales list. Eerdmans [publisher of the book] has rarely broken the top 100!" Amazon.com is the huge Internet bookseller, now the largest in the world; it keeps track, and allows customers to take note of, which books are selling the most copies.

Further into the Old Testament

We amble back to the topic at hand. Beyond a specific age group, who was your intended audience for *Intermission*? I ask.

"My devotionals were all CRC Pubs books: members of the Christian Reformed Church. They really haven't tried to go beyond that [because] they're a denominational ministry. The one that's the next on the list, one about the *Heidelberg Catechism* - there's talk about going with Baker [Book House] for that one."

After *Intermission*, CRC Publications was open to Schaap writing additional devotionals, aimed at a similar audience and age group.

He explains: "We went from [Intermission] to *Someone's Singing, Lord*. People said, 'Write more.' I said to CRC Pubs, 'How about one about favorite songs?' They said, 'Go ahead. There are maybe 60 meditations in a book. No, maybe only 40 - eight hymns with five meditations on each

hymn or something. It didn't go over as big.

"Then I did one on the psalms [called *No Kidding, Lord*], co-ordinated with some Sunday school material. And Proverbs. That one was *Take it From a Wiseguy*. They were all geared to families with kids. Then came two involving Bible passages from Exodus and Deuteronomy: *One Hundred Percent Chance of Frogs*, which came out in 1992; and *Don't Pray With Mud on Your Shoes and Forty Year Campout*, in 1993, which cover Moses's life and the Exodus story."

Schaap candidly admits, "Those four I thought were really good, but they didn't sell as well."

He explains that those he wrote "entirely on my own, except some kind of outline from Harv Smit [then theological editor at CRC Publications] on Proverbs. Maybe that's why they didn't sell so well: I'm no crack theologian."

'I give books away'

Schaap is sitting at his desk in his Dordt College office. I hear him rifle around his office shelves to see if he has copies of any of these books. He had wanted to check the publication dates to make sure he was right. But he doesn't find any of his own books. "I always give [my] books away; my wife gets mad at me," he says cheerfully.

But eventually he comes across some. He then tells me that *Someone Singing, Lord* came out in 1988; *No Kidding, Lord*, on the Psalms, in 1989; and *Take it from a Wiseguy*, on Proverbs, in 1990.

Bright ideas, old language

Schaap talks about his most recent devotional project, last year, *Near Unto God*, a reworking of devotional newspaper columns written in the late 1890s by Dutch theologian, writer, statesman and former prime minister Abraham Kuyper.

"That was a ball to do because Kuyper's thoughts were fascinating. You know as a writer that what we have to do constantly is 'show and don't tell.' I can't tell readers what to feel, I have to show you what you can feel. Preachers should learn that, if I may say that. The preacher's and writer's job is to make people joyful, for example, not tell them they should be joyful.

"Kuyper just demonstrated godliness - shows us - better than any book I've seen. All of Kuyper's wonderful thoughts were going to go down the drain if

somebody didn't rephrase them. But that doesn't mean the ideas are old. They're sharp and bright and timely. There's very little in that book that is really dated, other than the language."

Schaap then talks of his next devotional, which sounds as if it will be the most ambitious yet, as the *Heidelberg Catechism* is divided into 52 "Lord's Days" spanning all the essentials of the Christian faith in a year's time.

But he is undaunted. "Devotional books are fun for me to do. I learn. Writing is discovery for me. This catechism project is going to be fun. I'll enjoy what's in the *Heidelberg Catechism*. It will be fun wading in there and fishing through the weeds. I don't know how you can write as if you know the truth; I like to discover things. But there's a certain amount of risk in going in and saying, 'I need to find my own way through a story that's been told 55,000 times.' There's a potential danger there. Writing these devotionals shows me the joy of the *Heidelberg Catechism* - or Kuyper's writings."

If there's an increase in using devotionals to accompany one's personal or family Bible reading, Schaap guesses that that's because "the entire culture is on an incredible spiritual high - from these books, to New Age, to the Dalai Lama, everything. That's been the most important news story in North American religion in the last five years."

Retelling the Old Story

What does he hope his devotionals will accomplish?

"It's been said there are essentially five stories; we just find ways to retell them," Schaap says. "As I get older I really do think there's nothing new under the sun. The kind of devotional writing I do is to take the biblical story and spin it a little different way. For example: tell Sampson's story from the point of view of his jailer. Or look at Moses's sister: she's a gutsy little girl who goes down to the river and tells Pharaoh's daughter: 'I know a woman who can nurse this baby!'" He says it in a jesting tone of voice, as we're let in on Miriam's joke.

"It's really not making it sound new, but fresh. I had a prof who used to say that it's only been in modern times that people have thought that creativity means thinking new thoughts. Up until then it was repackaging. What they assumed was 'creative imitation.' We need to find ways to retell the gospel. Otherwise we might begin to think the Good News is us."

Development in South America

ECUADOR

Stories and photographs by Marian Van Til

Managing editor Marian Van Til traveled to Ecuador in October 1999 as part of a four-country visit partially funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The purpose of the trip was to observe the development the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is doing in Central and South America and to make CC's audience, and eventually a wider audience, more aware of such work and what it involves. This is the last in a four-part series.

*A brief history:**A country beautiful and ungovernable*

Ecuador lies between Colombia and Peru along the northeast coast of South America. Many people consider it the most beautiful country on the continent, and I saw plenty of evidence of its beauty in both rain forest and mountains.

Its history goes back some 12,000 years to pre-Columbian civilizations. Much is still being discovered, but slowly, because unearthing and preserving ruins is not one of the country's, nor its scientists' and historians' priorities, as it is in, say, Mexico or Peru.

Advanced early cultures

The early cultures were surprisingly advanced by European standards. By 600 BC, trade routes connected Ecuador with Chile to the south and with Mexico to the north. Cities were designed with streets and drainage areas. Labor became specialized and shops existed.

By 300 BC alloys of gold and platinum were created, a practice which did not catch on in Europe until the 19th century. Cities existed throughout the country, and agriculture was the main product.

And then the Incas came, conquering; and then the Spanish. The Incas began to fight and subdue the local tribes and incorporate them into the Inca kingdom.

If the Incas were brutal, the "civilized" Spaniards were too. If the conquistadors' viciousness disturbs our sensibilities, so does their blatant misuse of Christianity.

In 1533, Francisco Pizarro

claimed what is now Ecuador for Spain. In one of the worst chapters in Spanish history in the New World, Pizarro and a band of 200 men tricked and massacred 1000 unarmed Incas whom they had invited to a feast and who thought the Spaniards were gods.

When the Incan emperor Atahualpa refused to agree to convert to Christianity and to accept the rule of the Spanish Crown, Pizarro's army killed most of the Incas within half an hour. The Emperor was left alive and held for ransom. When the ransom was paid, Atahualpa was executed anyway (but baptized first!).

The history of subsequent conquistadors, including Gonzalo Pizarro, Francisco Pizarro's brother who became a governor under the viceroy of Peru and was soon beheaded, isn't much more savory. The Spanish maintained strict control over Ecuador for 250 years.

Plowing the sea

Finally in the early 19th century, Simon Bolivar led a revolt against Spain. Independence was declared August 10, 1809, but it took 13 years to achieve.

Ecuador initially became part of the Federation of Gran Colombia, with Bolivar assuming control as dictator of the new federation.

But Bolivar's dream of a United Spanish America proved to be impossible. Not long before his death in 1830 he said: "America is ungovernable. Those who have served the revolution have plowed

the sea."

He was right. As in the other countries on which I've reported – and as is true in virtually every country in Central and South America – Ecuador's history after independence was fraught with fighting, assassinations and seizure of power by military dictators.

The first of these was Juan Jose Flores, a 30-year-old general of Bolivar's who had his main rival assassinated, declared (apparently without irony) Ecuador a republic, and himself the first president.

There have been 86 changes in government since Ecuador became a republic, each regime lasting an average of 1-3/4 years.

Such political instability has resulted in severe economic problems and in immature governments which have little idea how to govern. In the 17 years between 1931 and 1948 none of the 21 presidents successfully completed a term!

Boundary disputes with Peru over an area called the Oriente have also been a recurring feature of Ecuadoran history; and in fact, it was only within the last two years that a treaty has finally been signed resolving (it is hoped) the last of those disputes.

In the early 20th century Ecuador's main exports were fish and agricultural products. In the 1960s, oil exploration paid off, and foreign-owned companies began to export oil from the Amazon region. The oil crisis of the '70s



A tropical flower, all gold, red and yellow: rain forest enchantment.



A bus-window view: a ribbon of water grants momentary serenity.

put Ecuador on the global economic map for the first time – but exploiting oil reserves also brought environmental problems and the beginning of wide-scale destruction of the rain forests.

A 1978 constitution ostensibly returned Ecuador to democracy, which hasn't dissipated either the ingrained political corruption or the country's economic instability.

In fact, in the past year Ecuador defaulted on its international loans and its currency is virtually worthless. There has developed a two-tiered economy, one in valuable dollars, one in nearly useless sucres.

An out-and-out war with Peru in 1995 over the Oriente sent the country into an economic spiral, while at the same time a corruption scandal was revealed in the government so widespread that the Vice president fled to Costa Rica and 23 ministers were either impeached or resigned.

'Loco' goings-on

An "anti-establishment" president was then elected: Abdala Bucaram, called "El Loco" (the Crazy Man). He was in office barely six months. Increases in gas, telephone and electricity taxes led to a 300 per cent rise in utility prices in 1996. Bucaram passed labor reforms allowing for the easier dismissal of employees, which infuriated labor unions.

By January 1997 there were reports of widespread corruption, and violent protests began. That February, the Congress declared Bucaram mentally unfit (loco) and removed him from office. He refused to leave and barricaded himself inside the presidential palace. The military withdrew support, forcing him to flee the country for Panama, where he still

lives in exile.

An interim president Fabian Alcaron (1997-98) replaced him. But allegations of political paybacks were brought against him: it came to light that while serving as president of Congress he approved the government hiring of numerous people who had no function.

Current president Jamil Mahuad was elected in August 1998; his term runs out in January 2003. But his days, too, may be numbered.

Just recently, on January 6, 1,000 demonstrators marched on the presidential palace in Quito demanding Mahuad's resignation, saying he has mismanaged the economy: the inflation rate is now 60 per cent, and the economy shrank seven per cent in 1999.

Similar demonstrations took place in two other cities, Guayaquil, the country's largest; and in Cuenca in the south. (Ecuador has a population of 12 million.)

Mahuad reacted by declaring a countrywide state of emergency, the Associated Press reported. He had police break up demonstrations with tear gas, and, in Quito, stationed armored riot police around his presidential palace.

Ecuador's main labor organization, which a January 6 AP report described as the "leftist-led Unified Workers Front," and which has 600,000 members, has announced plans to launch a series of protests against the government. There have been three national strikes since Mahuad took office in August 1998.

The president is facing calls to step down from rivals on both the left and the right, as well as from business leaders, as this economic crisis is the country's worst since the Great Depression.



A panoramic view looking at a convergence of several of the many rivers in the rain forest.

Development in South America

CRWRC in Ecuador

Marian Van Til



A Quichuan mountain girl with her baby.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) has had a long-time presence in Ecuador in the person of Betty Roldan Wood. A native of Chile who became acquainted with the Christian Reformed Church while living in Florida with relatives, Betty is a small powerhouse of energy, enthusiasm and commitment.

The fact that she is a native Spanish speaker and loves and intimately understands the Ecuadorian culture in which she now lives – including that of both the jungle and mountain Quichuan Indians who are CRWRC's primary focus – makes her work all the more effective.

And so does the fact that the work is now shared with her equally committed and adept husband of two years, Robert Wood, a native Scot who came to Ecuador by way of several decades in Belize as an engineer.

Basic health needs

Betty has a master's degree in public health, and one of the areas on which she concentrates is teaching health education to the women in the eight communities near Tena, a city on the outskirts of the rain forest in the Napo region.

Because of her training, she

gives advice and does the teaching herself: basic sanitation – the importance of clean water, of washing hands and eating utensils. There is a lot of diarrhea and many skin problems because sanitation is so poor, she says. Training at the community level works well here (it doesn't everywhere).

Vaccinations are provided by the government, and Betty's courses are co-ordinated with the government. That's partly so that the women who participate can receive diplomas for completing a course, which they are proud of. She also co-ordinates with a teaching nurse at the University of Quito, who sends students here to do internships.

Overall, CRWRC is involved in both jungle and mountain communities, supporting water projects, micro-enterprise (much of it with women selling fruit or chickens, or clothing they've sewed) and providing agricultural expertise and advice.

Relentless energy

I got a taste of Betty's relentless energy virtually on arrival in Quito, Ecuador's beautiful capital nestled in a valley between seemingly protective mountain peaks. (The peaks are not as protective as one might fancy: some of them are volcanic, and Pichincha had spewed billows of ash over the city only two weeks before I arrived, and was still smoldering.)

My plane was very late coming from Tegucigalpa, Honduras. By the time I got through Customs, and Betty and I had taken a taxi to her apartment, lugged my bags up three flights of stairs, had tea and talked a little, it was 1 a.m. That's when she told me we would have to get up at 4 o'clock to get to a bus that would be making the 5-hour trip through the mountains to the jungle city of Tena the next day. Inwardly I groaned.

The next morning we trekked

out into the cool darkness and tried, unsuccessfully, to find a cab.

Eventually a city bus came roaring down the road, billowing choking, eye-stinging black exhaust (a common sight and smell throughout Central and South America).

For us women it slowed virtually to a complete stop, long enough for us to hop on quickly, then continued hurling at an amazing speed down still traffic-empty street. Male passengers, I noticed, had to jump on while the bus still rolled. I wondered about this, and was later told that the myriad "city" buses are, in fact, privately owned, and drivers must compete fiercely for riders.

Rockin' and rollin'

The trip to Tena was, well, "a trip!" as we used to say in my college days. The driver and his colleague felt the need for continuous loud music as an accompaniment to our constant wind ing up (then down) the narrow mountain road with its many treacherous bends.

At one point the bus rolled to a stop – in the lane in which we had been traveling, as the road had no shoulder. The driver pulled a wrench and a screwdriver out of a bag, unscrewed the floor panel over the engine and the two men did some operating for a while.

From what I could tell, it seemed as if the transmission had been sticking in first gear. Eventually everything was put back in its place, and we were on our way again. I got the impression this was not the first time the bus had needed such repairs.

An encounter with armed guards

A while later we were flagged down at a regional border by a group armed soldiers in camouflage fatigues. They conferred with the driver and his pal, and we were all told to get off the bus.

The soldiers took my passport and told Betty I should come along with them. The other passengers looked at me curiously. I was one of the few white people on the bus, and probably the only North American visitor.

Two soldiers, their rifles slung over their shoulders, looked at my passport intently, looked at me, and wrote the passport number down in a logbook. Silently they handed it back to me. Betty stood nearby looking unconcerned.

All the others were back on the bus by the time we came out of the guard hut. It was then Betty told me that we were entering the area where the American, Canadian and Spanish oil workers had been

kidnapped earlier in the year. The government was now keeping careful track of European and North American visitors.

Under normal circumstances I would have found all this quite fascinating, but I was feeling the effects of my lack of sleep.

At long last we pulled into Tena, a surprisingly big city for a place so relatively remote. We walked the few blocks to a hostel where we were to meet Robert.

Robert is witty and interesting, and a lilting Scottish accent is still very prominent after all his years away from his native land. Betty, Robert and I had a rejuvenating lunch, and then we headed into the jungle in their rugged Toyota Land

roughly 30 feet.)

On the other side, after a short but steep climb, we had arrived. We came into a grassy clearing, around the perimeter of which were a handful of wooden-sided, grass-roofed houses on stilts. Everything built in the jungle is on stilts: the high humidity and termites and ants will get it if it's not.

'Chicken' again

Robert led us to the two-room home of a family who immediately served us a fresh citrus fruit which tasted like a cross between an orange and a lemon, already partially peeled. Everywhere in Ecuador – and in the other three countries of my visit – people fed



Betty and Robert Wood sing along with the jungle community near Campana Cocha.

Cruiser. We were to go to meet a community of Quichuas who live yet further into the jungle at Campana Cocha.

I would also meet, and Robert and Betty, would catch up with, three men from Michigan, all water engineers in their jobs back home, who were in the country to assess sites suitable for water projects, and to check on projects already underway, supported by Water for People, the non-profit organization they worked for in their spare time.

Rock-hound's delight

The community we were to visit was about an hour-and-a-half into the rain forest from Tena. We arrived at a clearing in which stood one dwelling and a school.

After a short walk to a river's edge, we walked further on what is during parts of the year part of the river bed: a boulder-strewn expanse which would make any rock-hound grin with delight.

We took a balsa wood dugout canoe to the other side, in this case powered by a small motor. (I had seen pictures of such boats but was surprised at its great length –

us or offered drink. And everywhere one had to be careful of accepting the drink especially, as the untreated water is laden with bacteria which wreaks havoc with one's innards.

We had our refreshment, talked a little, I took some pictures, and we moved on to the block building which serves as a community centre. On the way we met and I was introduced to the Michiganders, muddy and sweated-drenched from an arduous day on the jungle mountainside lugging equipment up to a water-project site.

At the community centre, a large rectangular room set with a row of tables and benches, we were offered a hot meal: chopped palmetto; several kinds of fish, coated and fried; and something that looked rather like chicken. Robert informed me – before I ate it – it was armadillo. No matter, I would try it.

"It tastes like chicken," I said, smiling at repeating again that oft-repeated line. (Why does everything taste like chicken?) It did, except near the bone, which

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"A boulder-strewn expanse which would make any rock-hound grin."

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was gamier tasting.

Our Michigan friends had already eaten. When they found out the "chicken" was armadillo, they thought Robert was putting them on -- which wouldn't have been entirely impossible. They had enjoyed it.

They told of a truly bad culinary experience they had had the previous night: they were offered soup in which the main ingredient was a creature commonly called jungle rat, which looks like an over-sized guinea pig, but not as cute.



On the way to see an experimental fish pond it was chicken feeding time. Several dozens chicks followed their mothers out of the tall grass for an easier meal. The chicks and the onlookers seemed equally delighted.

It had been foul and musky tasting. Only one of them had been able to almost finish it. The thought of the taste still made them shudder.

A group of men -- community leaders -- sat just down the table from us and they told us about some of what I came to hear. One of them, Gabriel Alvarado, is the program director for AIEN, the Association of Evangelical Indians of Napo, one of the indigenous groups whose work CRWRC supports with money and Betty and Robert's expertise.

Children everywhere

AIEN is involved with the water project, income generation (raising foods), growing and tending a botanical garden of medicinal plants, education -- there is a school at Campana Cocha with 180 students! Teachers come from Tena, and the school's director lives there.

Since birth control is generally not practised, and is morally resisted, there are children everywhere in such Indian communities. In this one, I was told there are more than 100 children under the age of five.

The sun for light

Ecuador, as its name says, lies on the equator, where sunrise occurs at 6 a.m., sunset at 6 p.m., all year round, always; and there's virtually no dusk or daybreak. Now it's light; now it's dark. (Robert made an interesting observation to me which I had never thought of: every place on earth gets the same amount of sunlight per year, it's just distributed very differently.)

Except in the cities, where there is electricity, human life is geared to the natural light of day. We had stayed a little longer than expected at Campana Cocha, but were to spend the night about 20 minutes further down the road with the people of another community.

Robert was driving and had to make two trips for the six of us, as gear was strewn in the back of the vehicle. As Robert, Betty and I neared the second camp it was suddenly dark. No one hurries in the jungle -- most of the time it's just too hot and humid to move too fast -- and it was already dark anyway. So eventually our beds were prepared -- either hammocks, or sleeping bags in tents set up in one of the community huts.

For the first time in my life I had a hammock as a bed, strung from rafters which supported the grass roof of a two-room hut. As long as I was off the ground, and away from the possibility of visitation by creepy crawly things in the night, I didn't mind.

But the hammock had obviously been woven for persons somewhat shorter than myself (I'm 5' 10"). If there was any real discomfort, from the point of view of a comfort-loving North American, it was the lack of running water here, hot or cold, and thus no possibility of actually getting clean (after a muggy, active day in the rain forest that would have been most welcome) -- except in the unknown, fast-moving, night-blackened river, which a couple of the guys did; and the absence of latrines of any kind, requiring long treks through wet, sticky mud if one wished relative privacy.

After our beds were set up, the whole community, with us as their guests, met in a slightly larger than a

house structure which was used as the school. The men from Michigan were introduced and talked about the details of the project: what would be required of the community were Water for People to approve this community as a project site.

I was introduced and, through Robert as interpreter, told the people that I was there to observe the work CRWRC was doing there, and that I would write about it when I returned home. Here, as everywhere, people were genuinely interested, and reacted generously.

We're singing their song

A group of women presented several Christian songs for us in the peculiar nasal-sounding voice that characterizes their culture's singing. Then a group of children did the same.

They sang in Quichua and in Spanish (one of the songs was a Spanish-language song which appears in the Christian Reformed Church's *Psalter Hymnal*. It was interesting to contemplate that we have adopted *their* song.)

Spanish is their second language, the one people need to know if or when they venture out to developed villages or a city like Tena. (I was astonished to learn there was actually bus service there in the jungle; as virtually no one owns vehicles, nor horses or mules here, it's the only way, beyond walking, that people can travel any distance.)

Taking 'ownership'

Mike, who was the Water for People team leader, told the village that they must agree to several stipulations regarding the water project, which would entail laying pipe from a spring and bringing it near the dwellings for everybody had access to it.

They would *all* own it and have responsibility for it; to ensure that, every family would be asked to pay 10,000 sucres a month (an affordable, fairly minimal fee) for the upkeep of the system. They would have to repair the system if it were to need it, and the fee would also go to pay a stipend to the community's caretaker of the system.

The night sky was stunning when we emerged from the meeting (there were actually lights in the school; they had set up a generator for the occasion). And in the middle of the night the moon was nearly bright to read by, enough to read by. This was a perfect setting in which to hear Robert recite, in Scottish dialect, poems from his

childhood.

As I would awaken periodically deep in the night, the unfamiliar animal and insect sounds of the jungle greeted me. It made me think of the equally unfamiliar people sleeping in the huts all around. Unfamiliar in culture and language, but not alien, because these were fellows brothers and sisters in Christ.

On to the mountains

The next day the men loaded all the gear onto the Land Cruiser's roof and we all piled inside for a considerably more pleasant (and one-hour shorter) trip back to Quito.

The day after, as Betty had other work to attend to, Robert and I would visit a couple of mountain communities -- and cross the actual equator -- a first for me -- in getting there.

Accustomed to the colder, drier weather at home, I found the mountain air, increasingly chilly but not cold as we climbed to nearly 12,000 feet, immensely refreshing.

The natives who live here, however -- also Quichuas, but with a very different culture and attitudes and different dialect -- wear woolen sweaters or shawls (or these days, ski jackets) virtually all the time, and the women wear their ever-present trademark men's-style fedoras.

The drive into these mountains on the opposite side of Quito, in the Pichincha region, was pleasant. I was told that Ecuador is one of the world's major producers of roses, and saw much evidence of that in hundreds of greenhouses which dotted the Cayambe valley.

The way of life of the mountain Quichuas is being changed by such industry: young people can make some money by traveling down the mountain to work in the greenhouses, more than they would in their families' traditional agricultural way of life.

Though the greenhouse work-

ers are not protected from the pesticides used there, as we would expect as a requirement, many of them think that making what they consider a better living is worth the risk.

On the way out of Quito we stopped to pick up Pedro Pasquez, president of AIEP, the Pichincha Association of Evangelical Indians, sister organization to AIEN.

Besides AIEP, there is an organization called FINE, the Federation of Evangelical Indians, with which CRWRC has worked. But "the trouble is," Robert explained, "they change presidents too often, and the new president didn't want to co-operate."

Pedro had worked on a garbage truck, Robert told me, but is now a Baptist pastor with a thriving church. He and his wife are also running a greenhouse pilot project growing organic tomatoes.

They took organic material from the garbage truck, composted it and used it as the soil base for their tomatoes. I saw their small greenhouse (perhaps 20 by 15 feet). They want to expand the greenhouse and form a co-op; a "market study" is currently being done.

An unusual professor

An agriculture professor at the University of Quito, Eduardo Espin, has taken an interest in the mountain people who live high in the marginal land ("paramo"). He has visited these areas and Robert arranged for him to meet with the farmers (traditionally everybody there is a farmer, meagrely supporting themselves from the land).

The professor has some very specific advice he can give on how to increase production and how to get raise better, healthier sheep, thus getting a better quality wool. (I was disquieted by the pen-full of sheep I saw at the first farm we visited; they were scrawny, somewhat mangy looking beasts which were obviously not getting enough

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A typical wood and grass home in a rain forest community.

Development in South America

CRWRC in Ecuador's mountains

h to eat. Yet they were not allowed to graze the mountainside, but kept in a muddy enclosure.)

Robert said it was "quite a thing [for Espin] to bring together the university and the Indian people.

The mixed people [of Spanish and Indian blood who make up the mainstream population] are not generally interested in the Indians."

He also observed, "It's difficult to organize the Indians; they're used to working their own little plots. But it's the best way. Otherwise they're compete with each other, and buyers will make mincemeat out of them."

Another group with which CRWRC is beginning to work is Partners in Christian Development (PCD), based in the U.S. A PCD member, for example, had been in contact with a University of Michigan agriculture professor who was a visiting professor for Uruguay who may be helpful here.

The PCD has also insisted that the people they help (to set up microenterprises,

etc.) develop a business model. That may sound daunting, and very North American, but it has been helpful, in fact. It makes the indigenous people consider carefully what they are going to produce, how, how much it will cost them, and how much they'll get in return; and it forces them to look and plan ahead.

At a meeting at the first farm we visited in the Candelaria de Cangahua community, I was given a run-down on what things were like for the people on these lands 50 and 30 years ago compared to now.

Onion, onions, onions

The land has become depleted in those decades, supporting few and fewer people - but there are more people to support. Clearly something needs to be done, so they are open to working with CRWRC and people like Professor Espin. CRWRC gives them (financial) credits to buy the things they need to grow crops and animals.

The main cash crop here is a leek-like onion, and a very successful crop because they are hardy, grow prolifically and can be sown and harvested all year round. The onions are, of course,

planted and harvested with hand tools. Buyers come up with pick-up trucks and deals are made on the spot. Or in some cases, farmers bring the onions down to Cayambe to market, in which case they get a better price. For a bunch about the size of a softball they get 1,200 sucres (there are 17,000 to the U.S. dollar in this hopelessly deflated economy).

They are also growing potatoes, which I was surprised to learn is the staple food of Ecuador (not corn as in Central America). And wheat, barley, lentils. They raise pigs, chickens, goats, mostly to sell.

AIEP works through the evangelical church here, but it also provides help to Catholics and non-church members.

Before we left, we were led into the kitchen of the mud and block-walled, mud-floored farmhouse and presented with lunch: a hefty bowl of boiled potatoes topped with a tasty but heartburn-producing sauce full of fried onion chunks and a red substance which I thought might be ground peppers, but which I couldn't identify. That was washed down with very sweet herbal tea. And all was watched over by a very slight, very

hungry kitten, to which I fed tiny chunks of potato, as the hostess had left us to ourselves after serving the food. (I had a similar experience in El Salvador, but it was chicken bits, and there were two hungry, scrawny young cats.)

Accountability, dedication

From there we went on to a community called Chambiola. There we also met in a community centre/school house, and heard similar stories. Both groups were not ashamed to appeal to CRWRC for more help than it was already giving. Community president Luis Ulcuango summed it up this way: "We hope, with the help of God and your [CRWRC's] help we will be able to help our community."

On the way down the mountain we had to make a stop to check on someone who appeared to be defaulting on a micro-enterprise loan. It took a while, but things got straightened out (in this case, problems with record-keeping). Accountability is a major element in the support CRWRC offers indigenous groups such as these. That and the immense dedication of its staffers in such countries are two of the reasons why CRWRC's is as effective as it is.



A Quichuan examines some just-picked, leek-like onions which are the main crop on the steep mountainside at this high altitude.

Dumb but not deaf: Encountering an every-day witch

Jon Dykstra

I hadn't expected to meet a witch on the bus, what with their alternative form of transportation. At the same time, on that cold winter day a warm enclosed bus was obviously preferable to her more open aired option.

Anyway, there she was, a rather attractive woman without even a hint of a greenish tint to her skin and not a wart to be seen. She had started the bus ride reading, sitting across from my friend and me as the two of us discussed a particular point of theology in a slightly louder than normal fashion.

My friend was on his way to becoming a minister and theological topics always had the effect of cranking up his volume. I suspected this was a conscious decision, rather than just an outburst of enthusiasm, since he always talked about how Christians had to be more of a light to the world.

And he was a light, a roaring, exploding bonfire of light that could not be ignored by anyone within earshot. It always made me

uncomfortable but the fact was that whether we were sitting in a steam room, or hanging out at a coffee house, or even sitting on the bus, he provoked obviously unchristian people into talking with us.

Her own personal goddess

This time it was the witch. She put down her book a few minutes into the ride and asked us what religion we followed. My friend eagerly told her and asked her what church she went to. "Oh, I don't go to a church," she said, "I worship my personal goddess at home."

The way she explained it, witches (or Wiccans) sounded a lot like New Agers. They did try and cast the occasional spell, but only love spells, and the central tenet of their religion was a commonality with all of nature.

After listing the merits of it, she concluded by admitting that her goddess was nothing more than a fabrication. That left both me and my conversationally endowed buddy, at a loss for words; we just couldn't understand how someone

could choose a delusion over a real, caring, and powerful God.

So we asked.

The question surprised her. "You guys have to understand," she blurted, "You pray and that makes you feel better, right? So what's the difference between what you do and what I do?"

The basic fact she didn't understand, the thing no one had told her before, was that Christians really and truly believe that their God is real.

I was astounded, but I quickly discovered she was far from atypical. Less than a month later my friend and I were making our semi-regular pilgrimage to a display sponsored by our university's pro-choice club.

I always went to pick up as many free brochures as possible, which, hours later, I would gleefully destroy. It was a small thing (in more ways than one) but I thought it was at least as good an approach as the one my friend tried time and time again; he always de-

bated with the pro-choicers. But what was usually a waste of breath turned out a little differently that day. After a heated five-minute exchange a pro-choicer asked for clarification. "Do you mean you really, honestly think it's a baby?" "Of course," my friend replied, "Why else would we even care?"

Unaware

That didn't fit what the woman had been told, "I thought you religious types were just using this issue to try to control women." Her friends all nodded in agreement.

They just didn't know. I've always wanted to believe that evangelism was a simple as living a good Christian life. I wanted to believe I didn't actually have to talk about God as long as people could see His presence in my life.

The problem is, in this post-Christian age people don't have the background to understand the very basics of Christianity, so they have no idea how to interpret our actions. They don't

understand the motivations behind our actions, so they ascribe their own motivations.

You're a Christian who doesn't work on Sunday? Well yeah, wouldn't we all love to have the day off. Sex only within marriage becomes the rational act of someone who's scared of sexually transmitted diseases. Action against abortion is understood as a power grab against women; and even prayer can be explained away as nothing more than a type of meditation or some psychological self-talk exercise.

Actions speak louder than words when the reasons for the actions are understood. If they aren't, we all have to start talking and explaining, or if we already are, maybe we have to start talking a little louder. And if you're uncomfortable with cranking up the volume maybe you can just hang out with a friend who isn't.

Jon Dykstra is editor of *Reformed Perspective* published in Edmonton, Alberta.

News Comment

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

I'M QUITE SURE that the weather is the most frequent topic of conversation. And it makes sense: the weather influences our moods and behavior. Hot weather is fine, but researchers estimate that global warming will cause an increase in crime. "For every one degree Celsius rise in temperature per year, 18,000 more murders and assaults will be committed in the US," say some modern doom-sayers. No, Canada will not suffer in the same degree, mainly because our average temperature starts from a much lower base.

As I am writing this, the wind is howling and freezing rain taps at my window, and in a few hours the temperature has plummeted from +10 C to -20 C, the second drastic drop in the past few weeks. Right now I surely could use a bit of extra heat. "Well," says Environment Canada, "it will happen: in a few decades Toronto will be like Washington: muggy, hot, humid in the summer, and year-round golf with little or no snow in the winter."

But people better be in good physical shape, able to withstand the new diseases that accompany a subtropical climate. Perhaps even malaria. Insurance companies certainly don't like the new trend: in the decade of the 1950s insurable losses amounted to \$38-billion (US); in the past decade weather-related claims have in-

creased to \$535 billion, a 14-fold increase.

Urban growth and increasing population density add to the risk. A violent storm in a desert will stir up sand, but when it hits a town it becomes a disaster. Watch for increases in property policy premiums and decreases in coverage: "Acts of God" are automatically excluded, and it seems that God has been acting quite a bit lately.

Five of the top 10 U.S. "weather events" of the 20th Century happened in the 1990s. The 20th century certainly ended with a weather bang: the Venezuelan mud slides rank as the worst weather disaster ever to strike Latin America, with an estimated 50,000 dead. These mud slides came upon the heels of Hurricane Mitch, which killed 11,000. These two calamities caused the greatest loss of life in the Western hemisphere since 1780.

JUST BEFORE Christmas there was a 1-2 punch in France, a once-in-a-thousand-years storm, which hit first the north of France, then even more fiercely in the southwest a day or so later, damaging or toppling 270 million trees. With it, the world at large also received a 1-2 punch: not only will we be deprived of the precious oxygen these trees have produced – they are our lungs – but we will also badly miss their capacity to

absorb the excess CO₂ we produce. Even worse, bacteria will now transform the organic mass of dead trees and branches into carbon dioxide, and so increase greenhouse gases, aggravating global warming.

There is a Chinese saying that for every tree lost, a star dies, which reminds me of something I read in *Discover* magazine: "Deep beneath the rugged terrain of northern China, flames are gnawing their way through the country's extensive coalfields. While the world focuses its attention on more visible crises, China's underground fires are quietly consuming up to 200 million tons of coal each year. The fires spew nearly as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as do all the cars in the United States."

And that is not the only hidden source of greenhouse gas: each year, mostly in Africa, an area about twice the size of the Netherlands becomes desert, suffering loss of soil fertility through overgrazing and population pressures. In tropical and subtropical zones, a hectare of soil holds about 38 tons of carbon. Destruction of its vegetation starts a chemical process that releases large quantities of the stored carbon dioxide into the air around and above us.

Even more dangerous is the far north, where the tundra is starting to melt, with its high concentration of carbon dioxide; this will vastly intensify the warming process. Enough. Suffice it to say that the weather will remain a topic of discussion for some time to come.

IT IS BUDGET TIME again for many churches. The year is over and the push to get last year's monies in was more or less successful. Here is something that might make it easier to meet next year's income. Reports the *Wall Street Journal*, capitalism's bible: "This Sunday when Sandra Williams goes to church, she will kneel down, pray – and then do a little Christmas shopping. Her favorite gift spot these days is the shop at her church, St. Timothy's Catholic Community in Mesa, Arizona. Right there in the vestibule the tiny store has everything: ornaments, stationary and 'holy bears,' and bean-bag critters with Scripture slogans. In the past five years the church store has doubled annual revenue to \$500,000 (US)."

If you want a sales outlet in your church, contact the CBA, the Christian Business Association,

which recently held its first seminar, called "How to Start and Run a Successful Church Retail Store."

Says Loren Mead, founder of the well-known Alban Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, "Churches are stuck for money. They're working to find other sources of income." The article continues: "Some churches say the stores draw newcomers who feel more comfortable in a shop than in a church." Even a coffee shop works. Says Kim Kaso, a church store manager: "A lot of people who start coming for a cup of coffee end up becoming members. I make a very mean double mocha."

HERE IS YET ANOTHER idea: recruit volunteers. I read elsewhere: "Volunteerism may well be the elixir that keeps people healthy and productive in their senior years." Neena Chappell, director of the Centre on Aging at the University of Victoria, has discovered that "the literature clearly brings the Good News that people who give their time to a volunteer activity, especially if it involves helping others, are happier and healthier in their later years, because it gives them a sense of well-being and belonging. It certainly is a part of the fountain of youth." I agree that there is a social aspect to a church community, but making it the focal point is distorting the emphasis, I think.

I ONCE REPORTED THAT listening to Mozart can make you smarter. I then retracted it and now I am retracting the retraction, because there is a "Mozart effect." A closer study shows that Mozart's music does have a profound effect on the brain, although no one knows why. So listen to *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, his beautiful clarinet concerto, "Coronation" Mass (or any of the other masses), "Ave Verum Corpus," the symphonies.

Actually, appreciating any of Mozart's or other great composers' magnificent music increases your brain power, about which new discoveries have been made. For decades it was believed that people were born with all the brain cells they would ever have. But not so. New studies on the workings of the brain reveal that throughout life, billions of new cells grow in the brain, not only from birth through late adolescence but also in adulthood and into old age when the process of adding new cells slows down but does not stop.

How to renew brainpower? The expression "jogging your memory" may not be used only to be reminded of something, but also in the active sense in which jogging or any sweat-producing exercise improves the memory. So here are three tips to grow old gracefully: volunteer, listen to Mozart, and keep physically and mentally active.

ANOTHER GOOD NEWS item: at the start of the new millennium I have received numerous forecasts for the next decade. The one for the U.S. and Canada predicts another four to five years of good times. The United States will continue to lead the world economically, in spite of the probability of a recession some time in the first half of the decade. The bad news is that structural problems, including an aging population liquidating capital holdings in retirement and severe labor shortage, will cause serious problems later in the decade.

The forecast is pessimistic for Asia: "Asia will not recover during this decade. Asia's economic problems cannot be solved without a wrenching remake of its financial system. Lacking the will and political capacity to carry this out, most Asian countries, including Japan and China, will remain in a long-term stagnation mode. Russia will spend most of the decade in the painful process of reconstructing its empire. It will seek to co-operate with China to block U.S. interference in the reconstruction process.... We remain pessimistic about the long-term prospects of a United Europe."

OH, YES, THE Y2K BUG. Well, at this stage in January it seems that the true Y2K bug is not located in the software of computers, but in the soft tissues of our nose and throat and lungs: the flu has arrived and everywhere in North America hospitals and doctors' offices are filled with ailing patients. This year's flu shot apparently is not doing its job. Which reminds me of a recent news item: between 50,000 and 90,000 people die in North America due to being given the wrong drugs. Modern medicine men are so busy that an increasing number are more aptly called doct-errs.

Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario, where he tries to keep the flu-bug at bay. His web address is: www.geocities.com/hielemah.

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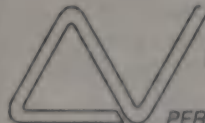
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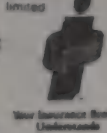
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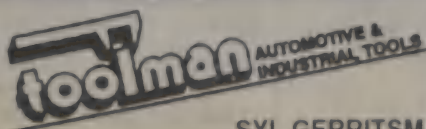
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Best wishes can be sent to: 140 Northshore Blvd. E., Burlington, ON L7T 1W4</p>	<p>On Thursday, December 16, 1999, the Lord took to himself FREDERIK (FRED) BOONSTRA (nee REINDERS-VISSCHER) in her 80th year. We are comforted and rejoice in the assurance that she now and ever will be with her Savior and Lord. Beloved wife of Martin Boonstra and the late Frank Visscher. Loved Mother to: Jake & Alice Visscher — Wallenstein Alida & John Zantling — Hamilton Jan & Lucy Visscher — St. Catharines Diny & Wayne Vanden Hazel — Moorefield Thereasa & Jake De Haan — Kentucky Hillie & Fred Numan — Hamilton Mother-in-law to Willie Visscher of Wallenstein and Henry Katerberg of Hamilton. Predeceased by two sons Albert and John Visscher and one daughter Jean Katerberg. She will be fondly remembered by her extended family: Jack & Margaret Boonstra — Ajax Martha & Herman Buitenhuis — Rockwood Betty & Bill De Haan — New Hamburg Sally & Terry Irwin — Inglewood Grace Rutledge — Collingwood Peter & Ingrid Boonstra — Peterborough Lovingly remembered by many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Pastors Gary Bornhof and John Zantling conducted the funeral service in the Christian Reformed Church, Drayton, Ont. on Tuesday, December 21, 1999. Correspondence address: 33 Conestogen Crest, Drayton ON N0G 1P0</p> <p>Oudega (W) Fr. Strathroy, the Neth. Ont. 1934 - 1999 Isalah 35:10 Gone to be with her Lord, my wife and best friend</p> <p>MARIE FABER (nee VANDERWERF) after a long struggle with cancer in her 66th year on Dec. 31, 1999, after a happy marriage of 43 years. Precious Mom and Beppe to: Anita & Glenn, Justin and Nicole Versteeg — St. Thomas Judy & Don Peacock — Barrie Joanne & Paul, Laura and Steven Millson — Strathroy Ken Faber — London John & Beverly Faber — London The funeral service was held on January 3, 2000 in the East Christian Reformed Church, Pastor Eric Pennings was officiating. John Faber Home address: 444 Metcalfe Street E., Strathroy ON N7G 1R4</p>	 <p><i>Congratulations to Jannes & Jansje Eising on their 50th anniversary.</i></p> <p>1950 January 29 2000 We thank God for blessing our parents JANNES and JANSJE EISING with 50 years of marriage. "Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything." (Eph. 5:20a) Henry & Maria Eising — Abbotsford, B.C. Angela & DR. Jacqueline & Grant, Jerry, Andrew Matt & Nelda Renkema — Blenheim, Ont. Justin, Heidi, Kevin Rita Kostaluk — Innsville, Alta Wesley, Jonathon, Philip Arnold & Helen Eising — Jarvis, Ont. Melanie, ShariLynn, Karina John & Melinda Snider — Port Dover, Ont. Heather, Steve, Robin There will be an open house on Saturday, Jan. 29, 2000, 1:30-3:30 p.m. at Parkview Meadows, Townsend. Address: 72 Towncentre Dr., Apt. 302, Townsend ON N0A 1S0</p>
			<p>Obituaries</p> <p>Leiderdorp the Neth. Wellandport Ont. June 19, 1908 - Dec. 6, 1999 ANNA VERBURG (nee DEKONING) Our dear Oma Verburg finished her long journey on this earth. Ill and tired she prayed that the Lord would take her Home. He did. We are glad and we are sad. Her children: Nick & Marrie Verburg — Dunnville Peter & Anne VanWyngaarden — Wellandport Her grand- and great-grandchildren: Nick & Trudy VanWyngaarden, Sherri, Stephanie — Welland Rick & Carol Aiders, Brenden, Barry, Shelley, Brett — Wellandport Joe & Bonnie VanGeytenbeek, Mitchell, Randy, Lauren — Fenwick</p> <p>Hoogkerk, Orillia the Neth. Ont. 16 February, 1900 - 5 January, 2000 The Lord called home His servant Our father, grandfather and great-grandfather HENDERIK OLTTHOF in his 100th year. Dear husband of the late Grietina Kok. Loving father of: Gerri & Chato Olthof — Courtice, Ont. Rika & Cor Moesker — Orillia, Ont. Predeceased by 3 sons, infant Gerrit, Lucas and Jan Berend. Lovingly remembered by 7 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. A service of thanksgiving was held at the First CRC Orillia Ont., Pastor Richard Nanninga officiated. Correspondence address: R. Moesker, 39 Esther Anne Dr., Orillia ON L3V 3G8</p>
<p>Thank You</p> <p>Deeply felt thanks go out to all who, in a creative variety of ways, remembered us in connection with the passing over of MIRTH into eternal life. May the Lord remember your gifts of love and prayer.</p> <p>Jack Vos and family, Barrie, Ont.</p>	<p>Anniversaries</p> <p>*****50th Anniversary***** 1950 February 16 2000 GERRIT and TJITSKE BONTEKOE (nee Vander Heide) With thankfulness to the Lord, we announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents. Their children Harry, Greta and Doug, Alice and Dan, Cecil, Jerry, Joe and Elvira, and 8 grandchildren. Open House will be held at the Canadian Reformed Church of Ancaster, 575 Shaver Rd. Ancaster, Ontario on Saturday Feb. 19, 2000, from 2 to 4 p.m. Address: 539 Mohawk Rd. W., Hamilton, ON L9C 1X5</p>	<p>Obituaries</p> <p>Safe in the arms of Jesus. 1956-1999 JANNIE (JENNY) NEWBURY (nee TIESMA) passed away December 16, 1999, in Duncan, B.C., after struggling with pancreatic cancer for many months. "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." She will be deeply missed by her husband Graeme and her children Brendan and Jordan. Parents: Sieds & Siemie Tiesma — Glen Williams, Ont. Sisters: Afiem (& Henk) Kloosterhof — Appingedam, the Neth. Yang-Soo, Ming-Yung Yvonne (& Leo) Weverink — Exeter, Ont. Jonathan, Sarah, Rachel, Hannelia Brother: George (& Sue) Tiesma — Georgetown, Ont. Jessica, Austin We, her family, and many friends, will miss her enduring spirit and constant hope. Correspondence address: Y. Weverink, 109 Andrew St., Exeter ON N0M 1S1</p>	<p>Obituaries</p> <p>Safe in the arms of Jesus. 1956-1999 JANNIE (JENNY) NEWBURY (nee TIESMA) passed away December 16, 1999, in Duncan, B.C., after struggling with pancreatic cancer for many months. "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength." She will be deeply missed by her husband Graeme and her children Brendan and Jordan. Parents: Sieds & Siemie Tiesma — Glen Williams, Ont. Sisters: Afiem (& Henk) Kloosterhof — Appingedam, the Neth. Yang-Soo, Ming-Yung Yvonne (& Leo) Weverink — Exeter, Ont. Jonathan, Sarah, Rachel, Hannelia Brother: George (& Sue) Tiesma — Georgetown, Ont. Jessica, Austin We, her family, and many friends, will miss her enduring spirit and constant hope. Correspondence address: Y. Weverink, 109 Andrew St., Exeter ON N0M 1S1</p>
<p>Job Opportunities</p> <p>John Knox Christian School in Woodstock, Ontario requires a Transportation Supervisor. The duties, which will begin in July, include scheduling, minor maintenance, and some administrative tasks. For additional information and salary, please contact: Mr. Simon VandenDool, RR #5, Woodstock, ON, N4S 7V9 Tel: 519-467-5422</p>	<p>Events</p> <p>"THAT THEY MAY BE ONE" The Reformed Church of America & the Christian Reformed Church invite you to "A Celebration of Unity" to be held in Redeemer College 777 Garner Rd., Ancaster, Ont. March 12, 2000 at 5:00 p.m. Guest Preacher: Rev. M. Goheen with joint choirs and praise teams.</p>	<p>Vacations</p> <p>Fully equipped luxury condominium at Cranberry Resort, Collingwood, Ont., 5 min. to Blue Mountain. Skiing, Spa, pools, cycling, hiking, etc. Two bedrooms, sleeps 7, \$600/week, \$300/weekend. In Niagara call 905-386-6976, Toronto 905-877-0408.</p>	<p>Classifieds get results! ... Because more than 10,000 readers are looking at your ad or notice.</p>

Classifieds

Obituary	Teachers	Job Opportunities	Miscellaneous
<p>Lutten, Ov the Neth. Thunder Bay, Ontario 1933-1999</p> <p>GERRIT TEMPELMAN our dear husband, father, and Opa went suddenly to be with the Lord on December 31, 1999. Beloved husband of Willy, loving father & Opa of Derric & Terry Tempelman Shawn, Ryan, Alissa, Nikki, Greg Joanne Tempelman Julian, Adrian Marcel & Michelle Tempelman Nathan, Andrew Brian & Melanie Tempelman Norman Tempelman Curtis, Miranda, Melissa "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a build- ing from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands." 2 Corinthians 5:1 Correspondence address: Willy Tempelman, RR2, Thunder Bay ON P7C 4V1</p>	<p>WINDSOR, Ont.: Looking for a Challenge? An Opportunity? Maranatha Christian Secondary School is expanding to include Grade 10 in September! Dynamic teachers interested in a grow- ing school with a future in an interde- nominational setting are invited to apply for Junior High positions in: English, History, Mathematics, Sci- ence, Careers, Civics, Business, Bi- ble, French, Band, Drama, Ph.Ed. and Technology courses. Send application and complete re- sume, including statement of Vision of Christian Education to: William Van Dyke, Principal Maranatha Christian Secondary School 939 Northwood St., Windsor ON N9E 2B4 Information: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519</p>	<p>APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED for a POSSIBLE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL POSITION</p> <p>Abbotsford Christian School, a multi-denominational school system serving over 1100 students at 3 campuses, is inviting applications for a possible elementary (K-7) principal at our Clayburn Hills Campus.</p> <p>We are looking for an experienced and enthusiastic leader who is deeply committed to Christian education and is ex- cited about working as part of a leadership team.</p> <p>Application deadline: February 18, 2000.</p> <p>Please direct resumes or inquiries to: Eric Van Egmond Vice Chairman — ACS Board 2849 Woodland St., Abbotsford, BC V2S 4E5 Phone: 604-859-2499; Fax 604-859-9995</p>	<p>VILLAGE MANOR — our newly opened retirement home "...in the heart of Waterdown" has employ- ment opportunities for RPNs.</p> <p>Our small home (37 suites) which offers assisted living, has a warm and loving atmosphere and would be suitable for those individuals who share our commitment to pro- vide quality care for seniors in our community. Please fax resume to Jackie Malda, 905-689-8210. We anticipate full occupancy by spring 2000 at which time addi- tional housekeeping/kitchen staff will be required.</p>
<p>Church News</p> <p>Financial Assistance Those from congregations in Classis Niagara who are planning to or are presently studying for full-time ministry in the CRC as a pastor and/or evange- list and who are in need of financial as- sistance for the 2000-2001 academic year, are invited to contact the secre- tary of the Student Fund Committee — Louie VanderBerg, 1662 Second Ave., RR 3, St.Catharines ON L2R 6P9. Tel.: 905-641-1496, Fax: 905-641-4624. Application form deadline is March 15, 2000.</p> <p>Address change (Rev.) Bill and Lin Tuininga. 98 Tama- rind Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 2A6. Phone: 204-338-7502. E-mail:</p> <p>Address change Rev. Jacob and Maria Kuntz. #1502 King Tower, 35 Kingknoll Dr., Brampton, Ont., L6Y 5G5</p> <p>Notes regarding B.C. North-West classis meeting Classis B.C. North-West will meet on Friday and Saturday, March 10 & 11, 2000, in the Mundy Park Christan Fel- lowship Church located at 2600 Austin Avenue, Coquitlam, B.C. V3K 6C4. The agenda deadline is past, but dele- gates should please note the following: Please inform the stated clerk well in ad- vance of any proposals requiring the presence of synodical deputies, so they have time to receive and consider the necessary documentation. Be advised that classis will deal only with materials included in the agenda. Any material sent directly to church councils will be dealt with only if the councils had received it at least one month before the classis meeting. This applies also to material sent by any of the classical committees. Please also be prepared to come with nominations for delegates to Synod 2000 to be held in Grand Rapids, Mich., June 10-17, 2000. Rev. Peter Brouwer, Stated Clerk #12 - 7955 - 122nd Street SURREY, BC V3W 4T4 Tel/Fax: (604) 594-4025 E-mail: pebro@telus.net</p>	<p>Mountainview Christian Reformed Church of Grimsby, Ont. is seeking a Ministry Coordinator. This will be an annual, half-time, contract posi- tion to equip, encourage and mobilize members for mutual ministry. A Job Description is available by contacting the church secretary Fran Dekker by phone at 905-945-2325 or by e-mail at GADekker@aol.com. Forward application on or before Jan- uary 31, 2000 to Mountainview CRC, PO Box 131, Grimsby ON L3M 4G3 Att.: Mr. Henry Stienstra.</p> <p>Send ads to this e-mail ad- dress: ccadpromo@aol.com</p> <p>Personal 52-year-old Christian lady, di- vorced four years, wishes to meet a trustworthy and caring Christian man. Please send letters to file #2701 c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p>	<p>PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL Victoria, B.C.</p> <p></p> <p>Come to the beautiful West Coast and join a dy- namic and enthusiastic staff in a thriving, interde- nominational K-12 school system of 730 students. CHRISTIAN TEACHERS REQUIRED FOR 2000/2001 School Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Elementary full-time P.E. and Athletic Director * High School Learning Assistance, English, and Drama <p>Teachers must be committed Christians and certifiable by the BC College of Teachers. Send letter of application, resume and statement of faith to:</p> <p>Bill Helmus, Elementary Principal John Messelink, Secondary Principal Pacific Christian School Pacific Christian School 671 Agnes St., Victoria, BC 654 Agnes St., Victoria, BC V8Z 2E7 V8Z 2E6 Phone: 250-479-9365 Phone: 250-479-4532 Fax: 250-479-3685 Fax: 250-479-3511</p> <p>Smile! You're on Christian Courier's classified pages.</p> <p>NEEDED: PASTOR OF FAMILY AND YOUTH MINISTRIES</p> <p>This is your opportunity to be involved in and give leadership to the development of a family-based youth ministry of the First Christian Reformed Church of Calgary, Alberta, Can- ada. First Church is a dynamic, innovative church, minister- ing to approximately 750 people of whom about a third are youth. The successful candidate is a godly disciple of Je- sus, a gifted teacher and leader of people and a skilled equiper of people for ministry, a person who has a love for youth and a passion for the values of our church's ministry. If interested and challenged, send resume and/or request fur- ther information to: Search Committee, First CRC, 3600-15A Street S.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2T 5P8 or e-mail to firstcrc@cadvision.com. Deadline for applications is March 1, 2000.</p>	<p>For rent</p> <p>FOR RENT: Two-storey beachfront cottage at Turkey Point on Lake Erie. Sleeps 6. Available for 1 or 2 weeks, or entire month of July 2000. \$750 wk. Phone: (905) 689-6392.</p> <p>Read Christian Courier</p> <p></p> <p>all winter long 1-800-969-4838</p> <p>First Christian Reformed Church of Thunder Bay, Ontario, is inviting applications for a Director of Ministries with the main emphasis on Youth and Evangelism. The successful candidate must be committed to the Reformed faith, biblical in- errancy, 6-day creation, male headship and covenantal theol- ogy. Please send your resume to: Search Committee, c/o Mrs. Faye Dykstra, 2570 Veradale St., Thunder Bay, Ont., Canada, P7K 1B7. For more information call Mr. Allan Streutker at (807) 939-1691.</p> <p>Please take advantage of Christian Courier's Business Directory. For the low cost of \$25, you can advertise your business.</p> <p>Please add 7 % G.S.T.</p>

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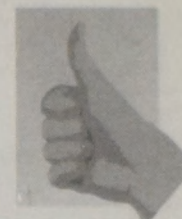
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FROM COAST TO COAST

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Back to God Hour

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Duncan - CKAY	10:00 am	1500
Burns Lake - CFLO	9:15 am	1400
Osoyoos - CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton - CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni - CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George - CIRX	7:00 am	94.3
Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers - CFBV	9:15 am	1230
Summerland - CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:00 am	1340
Ft. McMurray - CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CKER	11:00 pm	101.9
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan - CJSL	8:00 am	1280
Weyburn - CFSL	8:00 am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona - CFAM	9:30 am	950
Steinbach - CHSM	8:00 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:15 am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CHAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCO	6:30 am	630
Fort Frances - CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820

Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580
Kingston - WBDR	7:30 am	102.7
London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Newmarket - CKDX	9:30 am	88.5
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound - CFOS	10:30 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00 am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:30 am	1240
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30 am	920

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ	9:00 am	94.1
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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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NOVA SCOTIA

Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow - CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
Sydney - CJCB	8:00 am	1270

THE BACK TO GOD HOUR

Television:

Primary Focus

ALBERTA

Lethbridge - CJIL	Thursday - 9:00 pm
Thursday - 9:00 pm	Saturday - 12:00 noon
ONTARIO - CTS	Tuesday - 10:00 am

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MOUNTAIN -- AB	8 pm
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SK. & MB	9 pm
EASTERN --	
ON & PQ	10 pm
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Events/Advertising

Calendar of Events

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Jan. 28-29** Pre-marriage seminar. First CRC, **Guelph**. For information or to register call 519-822-7720.
- Jan. 29** Ground-breaking Ceremony. Celebration of Thankfulness, start of new student residence for Fall 2000. **Ancaster**, 11 a.m.
- Jan. 30** Dutch Service - Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, **Ancaster**, 3 p.m., Rev. Henry DeBolster. (#)
- March 12** Dutch Service - Ancaster CRC, Hwy. 53, **Ancaster**, 3 p.m., Rev. Ralph Koops. (#)
- March 12** A Celebration of Unity: The Reformed Church in America and the Christian Reformed Church invite you to a special service to honour Christ's prayer: "That They May Be One", Redeemer College (777 Garner Rd., **Ancaster**) on Sunday 5:00 p.m. Guest speaker: Rev. M. Goheen, with joint choirs and praise teams.



REDEEMER
A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

CALL FOR SUBTRADES

Ancaster, Ontario

Redeemer College is undertaking the construction of a 3 storey, 22,000 square foot dormitory residence for student housing. The building construction is a mixture of load-bearing masonry, precast concrete floor slabs, wood framing structure and various interior finishes. The project is currently being designed by Reinders Consultants Ltd., with the construction work to start in March 2000 and be ready for occupancy by August 15, 2000. The project will be completed under a construction management approach in which trades will tender their services directly to the preselected Construction Manager. In order to assemble a list of suitable subtrades from the Christian community to tender this project, Redeemer College is accepting letters of interest from subtrades.

Letters of Interest to include the following information:

- letter of introduction of firm
- project experience including project value and references
- financial references
- current workload and commitment to project

Submissions of letters of interest are required no later than 2:00 PM on February 11, 2000 at the administration offices of:

Redeemer College
777 Garner Road E., **Ancaster, ON L9K 1J4**
Attention: Mr. Bill vanStaalduinen, Vice President (Advancement)
Phone: (905) 648-2131, Fax: (905) 648-2134
E-mail: bvstaal@redeemer.on.ca



REDEEMER
A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

Ground-breaking Ceremony!

Saturday,
January 29, 2000
at 11 a.m.

Redeemer
College



Members of the public are invited to join the Redeemer College community in a celebration of thankfulness to God for growth and the start of a new student residence for Fall 2000. Indoor reception will follow.

777 Garner Rd. E., **Ancaster, ON, L9K 1J4** - (905) 648-2131 - www.redeemer.on.ca

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Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

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e-mail: rklassen@mutualsupport.net

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News

Ontario gives health benefits to independent schools

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — Agencies working for equal treatment of Ontario's independent schools are grateful for the provincial government's recent commitment to provide equal access to health services for all Ontario school children. But they want Ontario to go one big step further and provide equal funding for independent schools.

"This is a fairly big step forward in our talks with the education minister," says Elaine Hopkins, executive director of the Ontario Federation of Independent Schools (OFIS). She regards it as a "major breakthrough" to have the Ontario government recognize the need for health service coverage in independent schools.

In late December, Hopkins received a letter from Ontario Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer which stated: "I am very pleased to advise you today that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will provide funding to ensure that children with special health care needs have access to community health support services in their schools beginning September 2000. The decision means that all children will have access to nursing services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and dietetics provided through Community Care Access Centres

(CCACs) in educational centres."

Reacting to this news, Hopkins wrote in the latest OFIS newsletter: "This is wonderful news but hardly does justice to the whole issue of funding independent schools. Ontario could have one of the richest education systems in the world if it would recognize and equally fund all the interesting, different approaches to education in the independent schools of Ontario. The healthy competition would make education better."

Rays of hope

OFIS — which represents 125 independent schools, including Montessori, Seventh Day Adventist, Sikh, Waldorf, home-schoolers and special needs schools — has been working for 25 years to promote independent schools. During that time, there have been some "little rays of hope," such as this government announcement, says Hopkins.

She believes the government action comes as a result of a complaint which Arieh Waldman, a Jewish parent, filed with the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) in February 1996. The complaint said Ontario discriminates against non-Roman Catholics by funding Roman Catholic schools but not Protestant or Jewish schools.



Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham

In his complaint to the UN, Waldman argued that he experiences financial hardship in order to provide his children with a Jewish education, a hardship which is not experienced by a Roman Catholic parent seeking to provide children with a Roman Catholic education.

According to a UNHRC report of its hearing of this case, Waldman claimed that such hardship significantly impairs, in a discriminatory fashion, the enjoyment of the right to manifest one's religion, including the freedom to provide a religious education for one's children, or to establish religious schools. The full and direct public funding of Roman Catholic schools in Ontario does not equally respect the liberty of non-Roman Catholics to choose an education in conformity with a parent's religious convictions, he claimed.

Catholic faith and the author's religious denomination is based on such criteria. Consequently, there has been a violation of [Waldman's] rights ... to equal and effective protection against discrimination.

"The committee wishes to receive from the state party, within ninety days, information about the measures taken to give effect to the committee's views."

This 90-day deadline given by the UNHRC runs out Feb. 5, 2000, so there is now pressure on the Canadian and Ontario governments to take corrective action.

"The present government seems to be open to our requests," says Hopkins. "We've requested a meeting with the premier on funding.... We are looking for two things: funding and legal recognition." OFIS is also putting pressure on the federal government to respond to the UN ruling.

Important first step

The Ontario government's decision to extend health care coverage to independent schools is "a small but important first step" toward achieving full funding for the schools, says Dr. Janet Epp Buckingham, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's (EFC) director of the Religious Freedom Project.

EFC has been working with the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS) to get government funding for Ontario's independent schools. She observes: "It's the federal government that needs to respond to the UNHRC," but the provinces control education, so the Ontario government has been addressing this issue.

EFC has contacted both the federal and Ontario government about the funding issue. So far, says Buckingham, there has been no response from the federal government. "Generally, the federal government seems reluctant to do things like this" because the provinces have prime responsibility for education, she says. But she is hopeful that in February the Ontario government will announce more funding for independent schools.

According to an EFC press release, the UNHCR's response to the Waldman case is "a major victory for religious education."

"Canada does not have separation of church and state because Roman Catholics are guaranteed funding in the Constitution," observes Buckingham. "Provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta already fund other religious schools and the sky has not fallen. We strongly urge the Ontario government to end the inequalities in funding."

UN calls for fairness

The UNHRC's decision stated: "The material before the committee does not show that members of the Roman Catholic community or any identifiable section of that community are now in a disadvantaged position compared to those members of the Jewish community that wish to secure the education of their children in religious schools. Accordingly, the committee rejects the state party's [Canadian government's] argument that the preferential treatment of Roman Catholic schools is nondiscriminatory because of its [1867] Constitutional obligation [to protect Roman Catholics in Ontario]."

"With regard to the state party's argument that it is reasonable to differentiate in the allocation of public funds between private and public schools, the Committee notes that it is not possible for members of religious denominations other than Roman Catholic to have their religious schools incorporated within the public school system.

"... Providing funding for the schools of one religious group and not for another must be based on reasonable and objective criteria. In the instant case, the Committee concludes that the material before it does not show that the differential treatment between the Roman

News Digest

Pilot fired for leaving plane for food

LAS VEGAS, Nevada — A pilot who left a loaded plane standing at an airport gate for 90 minutes to search for food because he did not like the in-flight meal has been fired, says Northwest Airlines.

At Las Vegas airport last Nov. 23, Captain Floyd Dean, a 22-year veteran pilot, walked off the 757 he was to pilot, telling the crew he was going to find something else to eat, say airline officials. Unable to turn up anything he liked in the departure lounge, the pilot took a cab to buy food outside the airport before returning to the plane and 150 frustrated passengers.

One passenger told the *Detroit Free Press* the plane was waiting to leave the gate when the crew announced the pilot had left because he could not get a "decent meal" at the airport.

Bitter end for chocolate race car

LONDON (Reuters) — A full-sized chocolate replica of Alain Prost's Formula One Grand Prix car smashed into hundreds of pieces just hours before it was due to be displayed in London, England. Disaster struck as the 600 kg chocolate sculpture, worth an estimated \$96,000 (US), was transported from France to England in a truck.

When the truck's doors were opened upon arrival, the organizers of the International Festival of Chocolate were left staring at piles of bite-sized chunks of chocolate. Vibration or a sudden swerve by the truck were thought to be to blame. The replica had taken 400 hours to craft.

Millennium baby gets stocks

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif. — The first baby born this year in one Silicon Valley hospital received an appropriate present: a high-tech stock portfolio made up of one share of Internet giant Yahoo Inc. and 10 shares of computing powerhouse Silicon Graphics Inc. "It's a small portfolio, but a great remembrance of the booming financial times in which this lucky first baby is born," said Judy Twitchell, communications director at the El Camino Hospital in Mountain View, reports the *Toronto Star*.



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